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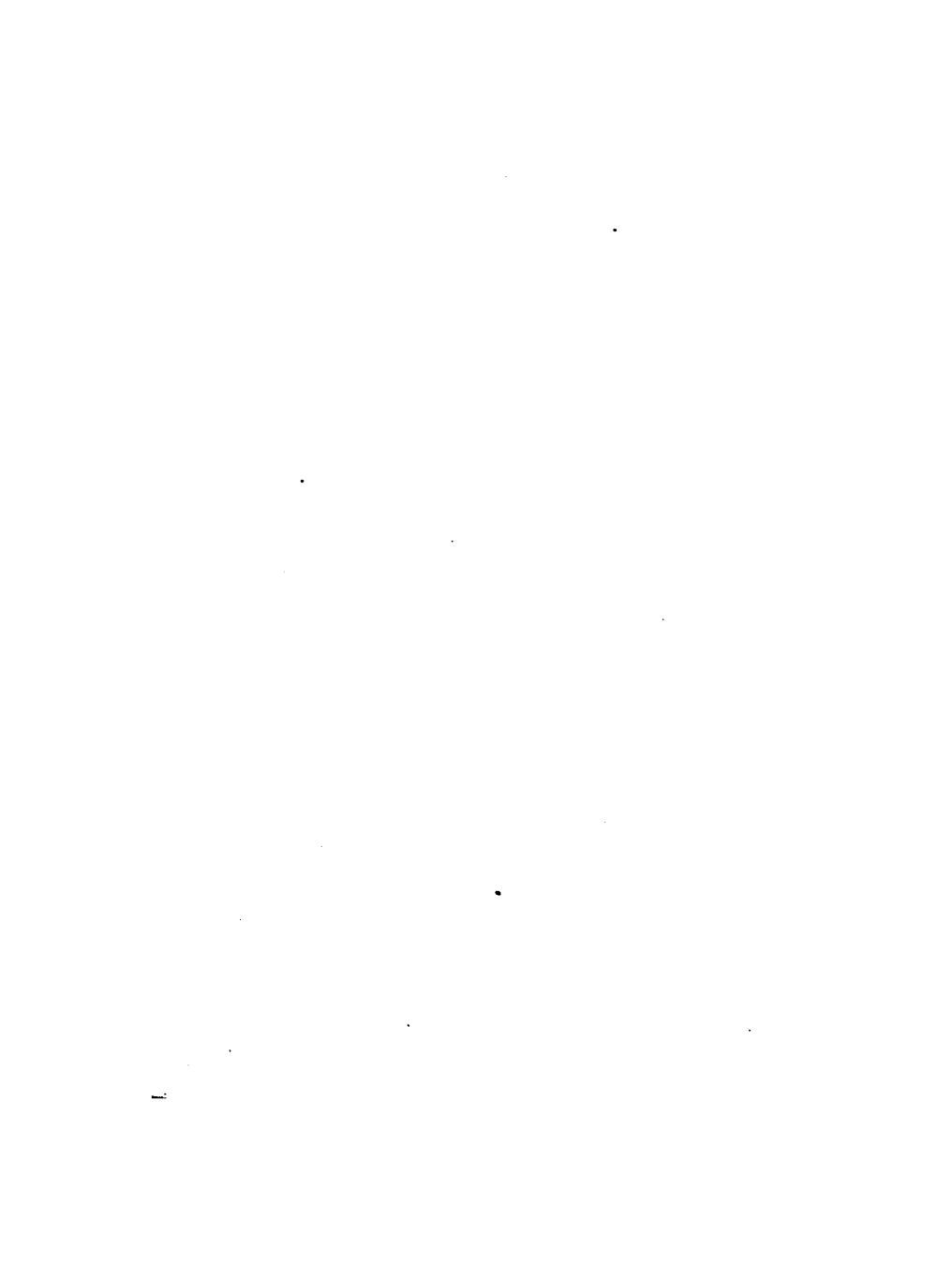
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SIN AND SALVATION

REV. HENRY A. NELSON, D.D.







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By the

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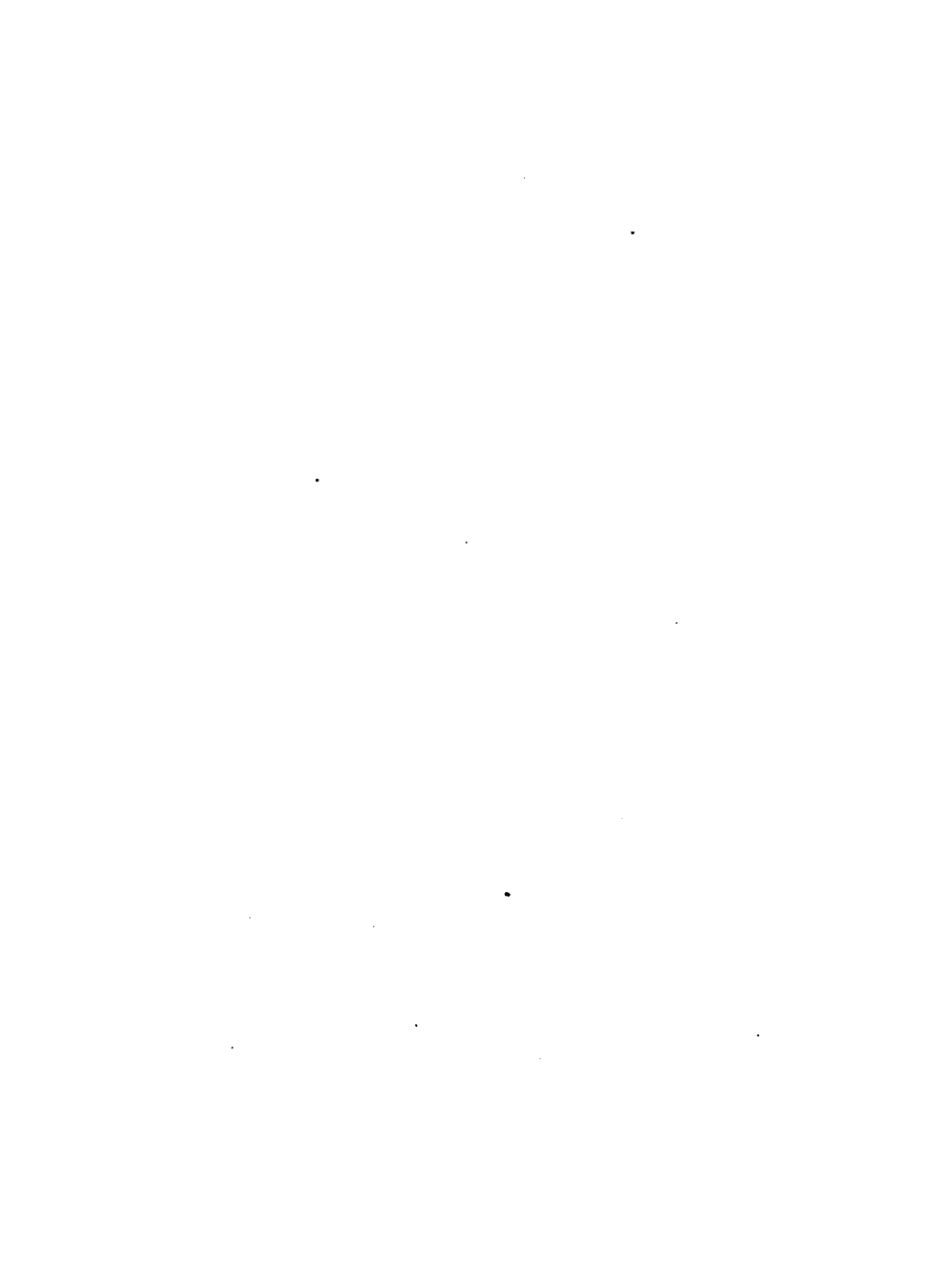
141. n. 36.

NOTE.

THE author of this work is a minister of the United States of America. It is reissued in this country in the hope that it may be of service in leading some to a better understanding of the great subjects of which it treats. The book is singularly fresh and suggestive, and will be helpful to many in these times, in connections where difficulties are often felt. It is the work of a man who does not merely repeat phrases which have become current, but who analyzes the meaning of the words he uses, and thus, as it were, recoins them. His illustrations are strikingly appropriate, and are drawn from a great variety of sources. The book contains the good old theology, expressed in the style of the present day.

January 1882.

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SIN AND SALVATION.

Yonder lies a lake which has places so deep that they have never yet been sounded. It would be rash to say that they never can be; yet, granting that those places are practically unfathomable, that it is not worth while to spend any more time in trying to sound them, is there not still a great deal that can be learned concerning this lake by careful observation and diligent study? Is it not best for people who are to live on its shore, and sometimes to row and sail over its surface, to become as intelligent concerning it as they can?

The attempt to sail to the North Pole, or to climb and travel to it among huge bergs or over broad floes and fields of ice, among the rigours and horrors of Arctic cold, is probably a hopeless attempt. Intelligent heroism is not likely to pursue that attempt much further. But shall science and enterprise abandon all study of the Arctic regions? Shall they not rather keep up their watch, and push their researches as far as human powers and resources are competent to carry them with reasonable hope of useful results?

No more let us be discouraged by the miscarriage or shortcoming of past attempts in the investigation and study of Sin; no more let us be intimidated by the difficulties which loom visibly before us.


We may well let these things make us modest, make us cautious, make us temperate in our expectations; but they do not justify despair, nor indolence, nor recklessness.

We cannot be rid of this subject. Whether we study it or neglect to study it, we are inevitably in it, and it is in us. We cannot escape it by refusing to think about it, any more than we could escape the bad air of a close chamber by refusing to become intelligent on the subjects of ventilation and respiration.

Let us be patient with the difficulties, patient with the limitations under which we are placed, patient with our own infirmities and conscious perverseness, patient with ourselves even when we find occasion to be humble and penitent. Let us prayerfully endeavour so to study that we may find deliverance from this evil and bitter thing, which then we shall not so much need to understand.

CHAPTER I.

SIN AS AN ACT.

N this simple form sin is first revealed to us in holy Scripture. In this form we first know it in experience. In the Bible account of the fall of man, the word *sin* is not used, but that is there first presented to which this name is given in the subsequent scriptures.

To Adam and Eve in Paradise a single plain precept was given—a simple, intelligible prohibition, limiting, in only one particular, the liberty of action which their generous Maker accorded to them, in the midst of a scene in which he had provided for the otherwise unrestricted gratification of all their desires. This divine command they were persuaded to disobey. They did disobey it. They ate the forbidden fruit: “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she

took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat" (Gen. iii. 6).

The Westminster Shorter Catechism states the truth with admirable brevity and precision, in its answer to question 15: "The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit." It is more fully stated in the Larger Catechism (q. 21), thus: "Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, through the temptation of Satan, transgressed the commandment of God in eating the forbidden fruit; and thereby fell from the estate of innocency wherein they were created." In the Confession of Faith (chap. vi.) the fact is stated thus: "Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit." These are clear and candid statements of the Bible doctrine, which we do well to have in memory, and often to meditate upon.

In that taking and eating the fruit of which God had said, "Ye shall not eat of it," was exemplified, the first time in human history, the act of *transgression*. That word (*transgression*) is exceedingly significant. It is a going over, going across. Still more exactly, it is a *stepping over*.*

* It is from the Latin—*trans*, over, and *gressus*, step.

when thus carefully examined, carries the mind to the natural mode of locomotion of the human body, by the voluntary movement of the limbs. It is not a flight, nor a sliding, but a distinct stepping. It is by an act of the will that the foot is lifted for a step. It is by a continuous act of the will that a succession of steps is made to produce a continuous advance in any direction. It is by a definite act of the will that a foot is lifted on one side of a line to which attention has been called, and is set down on the other side of that line. Thus we step over from one definite region or space into another.

It is not an uncommon experience to come to a line, to step across which involves the decision of some grave question. One deliberates at such a place; holds his foot suspended or arrested from its previous advance; considers whether he will step across, quite aware that the decision, as to that one step, is to settle the question and determine the direction of the future progress.

So Julius Cæsar paused and deliberated on the bank of the Rubicon. Determining at length to cross that stream, he well knew that he determined to enter upon a contest which should not cease until his power should be utterly destroyed, or he should become master of his country. The fate of his

country and his own place in history were to be decided by his crossing that stream, or by his deciding to turn back and not cross.

So has many a fascinated youth paused at the threshold of that house which is "the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." His whole future hangs on his decision whether to set his foot over that threshold. Just as decisive may be the stepping through the door of a drinking saloon, or stepping behind that green lattice, where one may drink, and wipe his mouth, and come away imagining that those who see him come away do not know what he has been doing, and forgetting that God saw all the time. It is that step which tells—the one step beyond the last point to which you can go safely and rightly—nay, the first step in the *direction* in which you know that you ought not to go.

Let me not omit to say, right here, that to those who have gone wrong, and who are wrong, a step *the right way* may be equally decisive.

Many a person has decided his whole future in deciding whether he would cross the threshold of a church upon the Sabbath, or enter a prayer-meeting, or go into a pastor's study, or into the chamber of a pious mother, to unbosom himself, in holy con-

fidence, to one whose sympathy is the best human help toward all that is pure, from all that is evil.

Every commandment issued by competent authority, every true law, is a line. It defines a region within which action is free, and beyond which it is forbidden. To do the forbidden action is to cross over that line. It is to *transgress*.

This is, indeed, a figurative use of language. It is the expression of moral truth in terms and figures of mathematics, of geometry. But I know of no other terms or types which can express it so well. Our customary use of such terms as "rectitude," "uprightness," "a line of conduct," etc., shows how close the analogy is, and how natural the connection of thought between mathematical and moral truth.

Sin as an act, the transgression of a rule, or (varying the form of the figure) as a deviation from a rule—it is in this form that sin is first revealed to us in the Bible. In the same form did each of us first come to the knowledge of it in experience.*

I have just now intimated that sin may be more exactly a deviation from a rule than a transgression or going across it. We may conceive of a line, not as

* It is not here affirmed that each of us *becomes* a sinner, as Eve and Adam did, by deciding to do a thing known to be forbidden. But it is when first distinctly conscious of doing such a forbidden or wrong thing that we get our first distinct idea of sin—first *know* it.

defining a space out of which we may not step, but as indicating a direction in which we are required to go. Every step must be on that line. Every wrong step is aside from it—a deviation rather than a transgression. Yet again: we may think of the line as marking the limit of a space, over the whole of which we are required to go, in some obedient labour, as in ploughing a field, or reaping it. The faithful ploughman will turn his last straight furrow close up to that line, as carefully as he will restrain the hoofs of his team or the sharp ploughshare from marring the turf on the lawn beyond that line. The obedient reaper will see to it that he leaves no stalks standing within the boundary, as carefully as he will hold back his sickle's point from encroaching beyond it.

The first human sin was in the form which I first illustrated, and which is rightly called *transgression*. It was in disobedience of a law which prohibited something—a law which did not require an action to be done, but required that a specified action should not be done. It put a restriction upon Adam and Eve's activity. It clearly defined one action which they must not do: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the

day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 16, 17).

Their doing that very thing which was thus plainly forbidden, was the first human sin. They disobeyed that precept: they transgressed that law: they stepped across that line.

They did this intelligently. Eve knew what she was doing when she plucked the fruit and ate it at the wicked instigation of the tempter. She knew that she was doing exactly what her Maker had forbidden her to do. The same was true of Adam, when Eve gave him of the fruit, "and he did eat." If we should suppose Eve to have deceived Adam as to the fruit; if it was undistinguishable by sight, or touch, or smell from other fruit of which they might freely eat, so that Adam could have no means of distinguishing it after its removal from the tree; and if we might suppose Eve to have plucked it and craftily placed it among other fruit served up in her customary way in their bower, while Adam knew no reason for distrusting her, and was incapable of distrusting her without reason;—if thus the man had eaten, not knowing, not suspecting that it was the forbidden fruit, our minds could not attach blame to such an action, nor is it possible to believe that it would have drawn after it such disastrous conse-

quences. Adam and Eve evidently did that forbidden thing knowing just what they were doing. They knew that they were eating the forbidden fruit. Neither did Eve deceive Adam, nor had the serpent deceived Eve into the belief that it was the fruit of any tree of which they were allowed to eat.

Not only did they know that it was forbidden fruit, but they also knew that the prohibition was binding upon them; that they were morally bound by it—that they ought to obey it. That sentiment which we express by the word *ought* was in their minds as it is in ours, and they knew its application to that action to which they were tempted. They knew that to disobey God was wrong. They knew that they ought to obey him. Whatever view we take of the amount and variety of their general knowledge, or of their intellectual powers and condition—whether we suppose them possessing intellects fully developed and mature, and acquainted with science, or altogether childlike in attainments and capacities—we have no reason whatever to doubt that they knew their obligation to obey God. Their vocabulary may have been limited: their ability to express moral ideas in words may have been small: they may not have been able to state or define the principles which are the ground and basis of moral

obligation. So is the little child now, or even the child considerably advanced in the knowledge of visible things. But can you remember a time when you did not know that you ought to obey your parents? Were not you just as sure of this—did it not lay hold on your conscience just as decisively before you learned the Fifth Commandment as ever it did afterward? And as soon as you knew of God, did you not know that you ought to obey him? It is not possible to be a child capable of knowing its parents, it is not possible to be a creature capable of knowing its God, and have any honest doubt of that obligation.

Adam and Eve could not be the creatures that God made them, and not know that they ought to obey him. They did know that to do what he had forbidden was wrong. And that is just what they did.

They did it *voluntarily*. The tempter craftily persuaded: he had no power to compel. If he had so taken possession of their bodies as to deprive their souls of all power to control their bodily motions, and thus had compelled them to pluck and eat, the muscular motions being directly and decisively controlled by his will, and not by theirs; then certainly we should say that this was properly and responsibly

his action, and not theirs—he did it, and not they. In what they actually did, we contemplate an action done with intelligence—that is, with knowledge of its real character—and done voluntarily, contrary to a command of known obligation.

This is well stated in the Westminster Catechism (L. C., q. 21): “Our first parents, *being left to the freedom of their own will*, through the temptation of Satan, *transgressed the commandment of God* in eating the forbidden fruit.”

It seemed good to God to test our first parents by a law which was a simple, single prohibition. If he had chosen to test them by a positive precept, doubtless he might have done so. If he had set them a task of positive labour, within the compass of the powers with which he had endowed them, it is evident that his command to do that work would have been just as binding upon them as was that single prohibition which he did enact. If, for example, he had bidden them prune every tree of the garden, and they had knowingly and purposely neglected to prune some one, that refusal or neglect to do what God had commanded would have brought the same blame upon them as their actual doing of what God had forbidden. The obligation is to obey, and the guilt of disobedience is the same in whichever direc-

tion the disobedience may be. The obligation to walk on a line is equally violated by turning to the right hand or to the left. We are as culpable for stopping short of the line which limits our duty or our divinely-commanded service, as for going across the line of a divine prohibition. A creature equally wrongs his Creator by doing the things which he has forbidden, and by leaving undone the things which he has commanded.

If until this moment you had never done wrong—had never done what God has forbidden, nor failed to do anything which he has required of you; if now there were right before you a line which you were forbidden to cross, and you were about to decide the question of crossing—what an awful moment this would be! How breathlessly would all who love you watch you! With what feelings would the angels look down on a human soul so deliberating!

To imagine one just now about to disobey God, who had never disobeyed him before, chills our very hearts. Is it less dreadful to have disobeyed him many times—to have become used to disobeying him? No; guilt is thus ever accumulating. Every single act of disobedience has its own distinct culpability. It is an evil and bitter thing to sin against

God—to have been long in the habit of sinning against him. It is not less dreadful because habit makes one lose the painful sense of it. It is dreadful to lose the sense of it. It is more dreadful not to be willing to confess it. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

CHAPTER II.

SIN AS A STATE.

WHEN a wrong act has been done, forthwith the soul of the wrong-doer is in a wrong state. It immediately knows itself to be in a wrong state. Not only has that soul sinned; it now is a sinner. The act of sin took place, and has passed: the guilty state continues. The act was done some time ago: the guilt of it, the blame of it, the sinful state of soul, abides.

Whether the wrong action has induced the wrong state, or has sprung out of it, and proves that it was existing before; whether the wrong action was the cause of the evil state, or the evil state was the cause of the wrong action—it may puzzle us to decide. But the mind knows them both as facts, as realities. It has no doubt about this. When a sinful deed has been done, a sinful state exists. Innocence is gone. The soul is guilty. This is now its fixed and abiding character.

We are accustomed, in thought, to distinguish the evil state of the soul, which underlies its bad actions, from the actions themselves. When one of whom we have had a favourable opinion disappoints us by an act of flagrant wickedness, we not only are shocked by that deed, but are conscious of deeper pain at finding him capable of such a deed. We are inclined to infer that he must previously have been in a state of heart different from what had appeared ; an evil state from which such an evil action has naturally proceeded, or which has been an adequate cause of it.

On the other hand, however, we are equally aware that evil deeds voluntarily committed react upon the soul which commits them, making its evil state more evil than it was before, or (in the first instance of wrong action) changing it from a good and holy state into an evil and sinful one.

THIS STATE BLAMABLE.

For this evil state or disposition, from which evil deeds will flow as surely and as naturally as streams from a fountain, or as rays from a sun, we cannot help blaming the subjects of it, whether ourselves or others. We do not more condemn ourselves or our fellow-men for what we do than for what we are. We do not more blame Joseph's brothers for not

- speaking peaceably to him than for being of such a disposition that they "could not speak peaceably to him." We blame them not merely for doing so many wicked, unbrotherly, and unfilial things, but for being such mean and wicked men as could do such things, for whom it was natural to do such things.

THIS STATE INEXPLICABLE.

There is a difficulty here which puzzles and baffles the philosophers. None of them satisfactorily explain it; none of us understand it. Nevertheless the voice of conscience is clear, and its testimony is sufficient for our practical direction. You may bewilder yourself in trying to tell how it can be that you are to blame for being such a man as you are. But then you know all the while that you are to blame; you feel guilty. We all know that we not only have done things which we ought not to have done, but that we are such persons as we ought not to be. That solemn word "*ought*" forces its way into our consciences just as irresistibly with reference to what we are as with reference to what we have done. Let us accept the self-evident fact. Let us confess the situation we actually are in. Let us bow down under the self-condemnation, in deep humility, in absolute submission, and in confessed helplessness,

at the feet of our Divine Judge and Sovereign. Then only are we in the proper state of mind to hear if he has any practicable way of mercy for us; to inquire teachably what it is; and thankfully, trustingly to accept it. Even then we may not be able satisfactorily to expound the evil out of which the hand of Divine Mercy has plucked us. Numbers of such rescued men have applied their sanctified intellects to the solution of this problem: some of them have thought that they had solved it; but other equally clear and candid and regenerate minds have failed to be satisfied with any proposed solution. For example, in our present actual condition, we trace a connection, as of cause and effect, between our sinful acts and our sinful state. We take bad actions to be evidences of a bad heart, from which they proceed. We seem to have our Saviour's sanction of this: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. xv. 19). "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark vii. 21-23).

Assuming, as we may, that our nature is now cor-

rupt, that our hearts are by nature evil, we then easily account for all the evil actions of which we find ourselves guilty. We can also account for our present possession of this nature. We have inherited it. But when we ask how the nature which we have inherited became corrupt, having been perfectly good in the beginning—when we attempt to account for the fall of our human nature from its original holiness—we can only say that actual sin, the first human sin, corrupted the human nature there, at its very source, and thence in all its streams. But now we have lost our hold upon our previous method of accounting for the actual sin. There was no evil nature back of the first transgression out of which it could proceed.

Shall we try to account for this by referring to the temptation of Satan, whereby an evil element was brought into the human nature from the Satanic? It is, doubtless, true that “our first parents, *being seduced by the subtilty and temptation* of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit.” But does this solve the difficulty? Not to my mind. It is a great marvel to me how an evil suggestion from an evil being could get any hold upon a pure nature, dwelling hitherto in communion with God, and in perfect felicity. And if I waive this difficulty, my mind will

still go back in the history of that other being, the tempter. I ask how he became such a being. How could his first sin, the first sin in the universe, the first going wrong of any moral agent, take place when there was no tempter to seduce, no evil nature to come in from without? Here my mind confronts a question which I not only cannot answer, but am sure that no man can answer. At this point, I believe, we all find ourselves utterly baffled—all who think persistently enough to come up to this point. The advocates of all theories, when they come together here, just look in each other's faces in mute helplessness. They gather, in awed silence, about the margin of a deep pit down which they gaze without seeing a bottom—down which they drop their interrogatory pebbles, and listen in vain. No sound comes back.

I strongly suspect that all human attempts to explain sin must necessarily fail. Human philosophy, the human mind, must, I believe, at last confess that here is one fact, the most dreadful fact in human history, which it cannot account for, of which it can give no rational exposition. I believe that it is really contrary to all true philosophy to try to account for sin. I believe that a fallacy lurks in every attempt to account for it. For what do we

mean by *accounting* for any fact? That expression has no propriety except with reference to a nature of things—an orderly system, in which things are coming to pass according to the law of that system, according to the rational idea of him who constituted the system. Now the very idea of sin is of a deviation from rule. It is a violation of order. We sometimes speak of the *nature* of sin, but not properly; for sin is *unnature*. It is wholly monstrous. It is the very negation of all with which reason and philosophy can deal. Nature hath laws; Nature hath order; Nature hath harmony. How beautifully and how impressively are the men of science, in our time, showing this in respect to physical nature in all its vast and various realms! Astronomy; chemistry; the mighty and grand movements of the worlds; the wondrously precise adjustments of the elements and atoms of matter; the absolute obedience to law in the formation of crystals, from the hard and durable diamond to the feathery and fragile snow-flake; the orderly adjustment and steady transmission of vital forces, through all the multitudinous species and varieties of plants and of animals;—in all nature we find order, harmony, law. But sin is discord; sin is disorder; sin is *lawlessness*. Am I not right in giving up all attempts to account for it,

and in dissuading you from spending any of your time or strength in such attempts? Is it not a reasonable opinion which I expressed, that all human attempts to explain sin must be failures?

ANOMY.

There is an old English word which you will find in the dictionary, but marked "obsolete"—that is, gone out of use. It is "Anomy." I almost wish that our influential writers would restore it to our current literature. It is the very word which we need for translating the most important word in a most important Bible text. I refer to 1 John iii. 4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."

In the Westminster Catechism (S. C., q. 14) this definition of sin is extended thus: "Sin is *any want of conformity unto*, or transgression of, the law of God." This is not, however, such an extension of the apostle John's definition as it seems. Our English version does not express the meaning of John's words either so fully or so accurately as it is expressed in the catechism. John uses there the Greek word from which that old and now obsolete English word was formed. In the Greek it is *ἀνομία* (anomia)—the English form of which is *anomy*. In

the Greek language the word for law is νόμος (nomos), and that letter *ἄ* (a) prefixed to a word has the same effect upon its meaning which the syllable *un* prefixed to a word has in our language. It just reverses the meaning, or takes the previous meaning out of the word.* Anomy, then, is *unlaw*. And the apostle John says that sin is *anomy*. The whole verse translated by means of that word would be, "Every one who doeth sin, doeth anomy, and sin is anomy." An able scholar, Dr. Blomfield, in his notes on the Greek Testament, has this comment on this phrase: "For sin is 'the transgression of the law,' or a *lawless conduct*. Whatsoever in any degree exceeds, comes short of, or deviates from the law, and, in thought, word, or deed, is not perfectly coincident with it, is sin—a violation of the law."

A thorough study of that word in John's epistle fully justifies the definition of sin in the catechism, which includes *want of conformity* to the law, as well as *transgression* of it. Not only so; I think that it confirms the view I have expressed of sin, as an unexplainable, unaccountable, anomalous fact.†

* Notice the similar formation and import of "atrophy."

† President M'Cosh closes a profound note on this topic with these words: "That in ethics, as in a thousand questions of physics, we *must often rest satisfied* with knowing the fact without knowing its

Sin is, however, no less real, nor is it any less dreadful, because it is inexplicable. A shape is not the less horrible,—

“ If shape it may be called, that shape hath none,
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb.”

Surely this inexplicableness of sin, the dark, impenetrable mystery in which it is enveloped, ought to make us dread it, and hate it all the more, and be all the more anxious and earnest to escape from it.

If we were living in some low valley in which the air was found to be charged with deadly malaria, would we keep our homes there because no chemist could detect, by any careful analysis, the hurtful element, or because no careful observation and study of the soil beneath, or hills around, or streams or marshes, or prevailing winds, could show us whence the mysterious deadliness comes? Would not we first of all build our homes far up the hill-sides, or on their breezy summits, postponing our study of the nature and causes of the sickness until our own blood and brains should be free from it?


If we had fallen into the midst of a bottomless origin, ground, or explanation” (“ The Divine Government,” p. 378). I also find this remark in Lange’s “ Commentary on Paul’s Epistle to the Romans,” p. 330: “ Only after the accomplished victory over evil, can the deep, dark enigma of evil.....be fully solved.”

and shoreless sea, and should persist in an effort to fathom it, or by the vigour of our own muscles to swim out of it, we must inevitably perish in the vain and foolish attempt. But floating for a moment on that wide and awful desolation, we might clearly see the calm heaven over us; and if we saw also a ladder let down from its serene height even into the wave at our side, surely then we would not turn away our eyes from its golden steps and the beckoning angels, down into the dark and hopeless depth beneath.

Verily, verily, we human sinners are afloat on a shoreless and bottomless sea. Left to ourselves, we shall toss and shiver here for a little while, and then go hopelessly down. But we are not left to ourselves. We do indeed "see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

CHAPTER III.

SIN AS DISEASE.

HERE is a very intimate connection between sin and bodily disease. They are found together a great deal in human experience. Christ is revealed as the great deliverer from both. The prophet Isaiah, the "evangelical prophet," prophet of glad tidings, foretelling the Great Deliverer, represents him as suffering, in our place, that which must be suffered for our sins. He speaks of him as bearing the heavy load of our griefs and sorrows, not merely as a sympathizing friend, but as our substitute, judicially considered. This is made plain by the expressions, "Wounded for our *transgressions*, bruised for our *iniquities*;" and by the declaration that the "*chastisement of our peace* was laid upon him." The doctrine of expiation for human guilt is there clearly taught. Yet even in *such connection* the idea of healing is present

to the prophet's mind. He finds it natural to say, "And with his stripes we are healed."

The evangelist Matthew, in quoting this prophetic declaration of Christ's relation to human sin, cites the prophet as saying, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses;" as if to his inspired mind bearing our sicknesses, and being bruised for our iniquities, were equivalent. The apostle Peter, with evident reference to the same prophetic passage, represents Christ as having borne our sins for their expiation, that he might rescue us from the morbid spiritual condition, and restore a new, healthy, holy life within us, "that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." The only phrase which he quotes literally from Isaiah is the one which makes the idea of healing prominent—"By whose stripes ye were *healed*."

Our Lord himself, in that instance of exercising his healing power which Matthew has recorded (ix. 1-7), proceeds in a manner peculiarly adapted to impress us with the close connection, in his mind, between sin and sickness. A man sick of the palsy, a helpless paralytic, is brought to him on a bed, by friendly persons who have faith in Jesus' power and disposition to heal him. "Seeing their faith," the Lord is willing to grant their desire. But

it shall not be merely a material benefit, a physical relief, a bodily healing. He compassionately beholds more than the body burdened with infirmity, even the soul loaded with guilt. He looks through the diseased frame, and beholds the sinful soul; and he directs the healing word within, to the centre and source of the poor man's trouble. "Thy sins be forgiven thee," is the word of relief to the sufferer, and of offence to the sceptical lookers-on. From their cold censure the Lord vindicates his power to forgive sins by visibly demonstrating his power over disease. The paralytic leaps up and walks home in their sight. A healed soul is enabled to uplift an infirm body, not only from its prostrate position, but out of its morbid condition. By one and the same mighty word the man is pardoned and is healed.

What is "disease"? It is *dis-ease*. You are familiar with the grammatical force of that syllable *dis* prefixed to any word. Dis-own, dis-qualify, dis-regard, dis-locate, dis-franchise—all these words express the opposite of that which the several terms would signify without that prefix. The first idea, then, which the word *dis-ease* should suggest is the opposite of that which is conveyed by the word *ease*. By *ease* we mean "freedom from pain, disturbance, trouble." So Webster defines it, and so your mind thinks it.

It is a condition or state which is desirable, on account of the absence of what is unpleasant. It does not necessarily imply any positive enjoyment, but freedom from suffering, and an opportunity for enjoyment to be super-added. Dis-ease should, then, imply the cessation of that condition, or its change into a condition in which one is a sufferer. It implies pain, disturbance, or trouble. But in use, this word (as is very common in human language) settles to a deeper meaning. It goes down below the fact or phenomenon which it first designates, to the cause of it. By the term "disease," the physician now does not mean the pain or distress which his patient feels, but that condition of his bodily organs which causes the distress.

The painful throbbing which you feel in your head, or the sense of oppression or suffocation in your breast, is dis-ease, or dis-comfort—disease, in the primary sense of the word—but your physician regards this as only a symptom or sign of the real disease, which he calls *congestion*. This means the heaping together of an excessive amount of blood, gorging and straining its natural channels, thereby causing the discomfort, the pain, which you suffer. The organs are working wrong. The heart is beating too fast; it is pumping the blood too rapidly; it

is straining and stretching the blood-vessels: they swell and redden; the healthy vital warmth is unhealthily increased to hot inflammation, to fiery fever: and as, when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, soon the whole body is sick—the whole man groans and labours with pain.

This is all because something has gone wrong in this curious bodily frame. Some law of its constitution has been violated. There is some *anomy*, some transgression of, or want of conformity unto, a physical law, the rule by which the physical action should be regulated, and only in conformity to which it can be healthy and happy.

You do not need a doctor to tell you that all such wrong working of bodily organs not only gives present pain, but works lasting damage to the organization itself; gets it into a morbid (that is, a diseased) condition. If the car-wheels are thrown off the track, and run jolting over stones and timbers, not only will the passengers suffer painful thumping and bruising, but the wheels themselves are likely to be broken, the axles bent, or other parts of the machinery damaged. If you thrust hard leather into your family sewing-machine, or force its irregular motion, when its bands or screws are not rightly adjusted, or when it creaks for lack of oil, you not only must

bear the present fatigue of such hard work, but must expect to find your machine permanently injured or disordered.

Here is another word, sometimes used as equivalent to "disease." It is formed in the same way—*dis-order*. It suggests at once the idea of derangement or disarrangement. It is the putting out of an orderly arrangement of something which had been rightly arranged or disposed. Dis-order in any of the bodily organs, as to their location or as to their action, gives pain, and works damage, deterioration, perhaps dissolution of the organs themselves. The organs of the human body, as truly as the wheels and bands and springs of the most delicate machine, must be in that shape and condition and order which the Maker of it intended, and must act regularly (that is, according to the rule which he intended), or else suffering and disease will result. The human body is a machine, the most delicate and the most perfect that exists on earth. A Corliss engine, or a Hoe's printing-press, or an Elgin watch, is not to be compared to it. The human body is a most exquisite machine. It is not only that. It is something more and greater; but it is *that*, notwithstanding. The human body is a machine that is alive; that has a soul in it. The soul is not in the body merely as the inhabitant is

in the house; not merely as the engineer is in the engine. The soul and body of man are united to constitute him. Man is not merely a body that has a soul, nor yet a soul that has a body. Man is a body and soul in a real though inexplicable union. I do not wish to entice you into any unpractical or unnecessary refinements; but I do wish you to recognize the evident truth that you exist, body and soul, in a real *union* of these, far more intimate than any which can be affirmed of the house and its inhabitant or of the machine and him who works it. And I desire that what you know and feel of disorder and disease in your bodily organization may help you to a true apprehension of the disorder and disease of soul which sin produces and which sin really is. I would fain quicken our minds unto a livelier sense of what is so variously and abundantly set forth in the Bible on this subject. It will help us to this if we consider it—

1. With reference to *our natural Desires*. Desire, or longing for a real good—the wish to obtain and possess that good—belongs to the human constitution, no doubt, as God originally designed and made it. It is not easy to see how a rational creature could be active and responsible—could be capable of enjoyment and capable of character—without this

element. It is equally evident, however, that it is an element which needs to be subjected to regulation and restraint. It is always the irregular indulgence of desire which moves to sin as an act. The woman took the fruit of the tree of knowledge, because she "saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree *to be desired* to make wise" (Gen. iii. 6).

Says the apostle James: "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (James i. 15). The word "lust" here translates the same Greek word which is elsewhere sometimes translated "*desire*." That it does not necessarily imply sin, is evident from the fact that it is the word in which Luke records our Lord's own expression: "With *desire* I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Luke xxii. 15). At present, we do not commonly use the word "lust" in a good sense, but apply it to desires which ought not to be indulged, or to unlawful indulgence of desires.

Closely related to both these words is the word "appetite," which implies desire, and suggests a positive impulse to seek or strive after that which will satisfy it. We commonly apply this to objects which afford bodily gratification, but not always. "An appetite *for power*" would be admitted as good English,

although, doubtless, it would seem to most readers as a figurative expression, like "Thirst for gold." It is easy to see that unregulated desires at once create disorder. A mind whose desires do not submit to proper regulation is as certainly a diseased or disordered mind as that is a disordered or diseased body whose organs are not regular in the discharge of their functions. It is a matter of plain and common observation, that indulging any desire wrongly usually increases its strength, and makes it more difficult to restrain or regulate than it was before. It becomes excessive in its force and urgency. It is morbid. It may be compared to the too rapid beating of the heart, and its effects to congestion in any bodily organ. Such wrong and unlawful indulgence does not therefore lose its quality of blamableness; but it is best for us to see and to study this other quality of morbidness. If this needed illustration, we might readily find it in the desire for intoxicating drink which so terribly tortures and enslaves its victims. If you have never felt the power of that appetite in yourself, God grant you may be for ever kept from it by total abstinence from that which excites it. But doubtless you have had occasion to witness its terrible power over some one in whom you are interested—perhaps some *one in whom* you are so tenderly interested

that it has caused "a sword to pierce through your own soul also." We cannot, with the Bible open before us, regard the drunkard as only unfortunate. It is not best for him to forget that he is guilty; that the bondage he is in is a bondage for which he should be ashamed and penitent; that God is indeed angry with him. Notwithstanding all that, his sin is also disease. It has deranged and disordered his faculties of body and of mind—of both in their intimate union.

So is it with all desires unlawfully indulged. That unlawful indulgence perverts them, exaggerates them, inflames them. They become unnatural, and are liable to become monstrous.

2. With reference to *the Will*. I am not going to plunge into the metaphysical mystery of the will. I purpose no subtle distinctions. I would only speak of what every one may easily observe and know. Every one does know that to desire a thing, and to will it, are not the same. You have a will-power by which you can refuse to gratify your own desires, especially your appetites. You may see luscious and tempting fruit, and say, "*I will not take it.*" You may strongly desire to lie too late in your bed, and may say, "*I will arise and gird myself to my labour.*" Now this will-power—this power to govern our *desires, and not be governed by them*—is as certainly

weakened, as the desires themselves are strengthened, by wrong indulgence of them. This is a dreadful effect. This takes the life out of a soul. Under this influence character perishes, manhood perishes, the soul perishes. This is to the soul what the disorganization of the spine is to the body.

3. With reference to *Conscience*. Avoiding all metaphysical subtleties here also, I include under the term "conscience" our whole ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and our whole sensibility in respect to this distinction. "*The moral sense*" is an expression sometimes used to convey substantially the same meaning. "*Bodily sense*" (which is a power of the soul exercised in and through the body) distinguishes between hard and soft, between hot and cold, between sweet and bitter, between differing qualities or powers of material things. It also gives us the consciousness of being variously affected by those various qualities or powers;—of being hurt or stopped by that which is hard; of being rested upon that which is soft; of being chilled by cold and comforted by moderate heat, or tortured by an excess of it; and of pleasure or disgust with things which are sweet or bitter, delicious or nauseous.

The "*moral sense*" in like manner discriminates between *right and wrong*, and affects us with pleasure

or pain, self-approval or remorse, according as we are or are not in conformity with our own judgment of right.

Certainly there is no other part of our constitution so important as this—no other in which our original likeness to our Maker is so manifest. To have this perverted—to have its power to discriminate enfeebled or distorted, or to have its sensibility deadened—I can think of no other so dreadful calamity. Does this happen? Has it happened, in greater or less degree, to all of us? Let each soul answer this question to itself, and to God. If in any soul there is indifference to this question—if any soul does not care about its own condition in this respect—I cannot think of any more decisive evidence that the soul has lost the healthy sensibility of conscience. The spiritual condition of a man who does not care about this, who is indifferent to it, is like the bodily condition of a man who does not care how near you hold a burning coal to his hand, or who would not know if you should thrust a needle into his flesh. Why is it that you cannot find a place on all your body into which you can carefully push the finest needle, without making you start and scream? It is because the nerves, in which is the power of feeling, are spread *all over the body*, fine threads woven so closely that

your needle will not go between ; it will hit a nerve before it goes far into the flesh. Anatomists call this the "nervous system." It is in this that we are alive, or "*quick*," according to the old English expression, found in old books like our English Bible. "*Quick*" indeed ; how expressive ! But our nerves may lose that mysterious power. They may become incapable of warning us of the dangerous nearness of the fire ; incapable of reporting to us the damaging puncture of the needle or cut of the knife.

Do you know what paralysis is ? Did you ever wake up in bed, and find that one arm had been lying under your body or in some constrained posture, till it had become numb ;—there was no feeling in it ; you could hardly tell where it was ; and when the other hand found it, and touched it, it did not feel like your own hand ? How briskly you rubbed it and lifted it about ! Perhaps you sprang out of bed, and bathed it with cold water, or cold air, or spirit of camphor. When the circulation of blood was restored, and the natural sensibility returned, you lay down again, and composed yourself to sleep with a lively joy and thankfulness. You got a new impression of the rapture with which the paralytics of Galilee and Judea used to rise and take up their beds, at the word of Jesus.

How would you like an arm that has no feeling in it—that might be pricked, or cut, or burned, or crushed without hurting you? You would be then for ever safe from that kind of pain. How would you like it?

How would you like a conscience that will not hurt you when you do wrong?—a conscience as indifferent to sin as a paralyzed arm might be insensible to the touch of ice or of a coal of fire?

CHAPTER IV.

SIN AS SEPARATION FROM GOD.



HERE is no more impressive, no more fearful view of sin in the Scriptures, than this of separation, alienation, departure from God.

Immediately after the first human transgression was consummated, our first parents showed a desire to get away from God, to conceal themselves from him. Although so little is recorded of God's actual verbal communication with Adam and Eve in their innocence (Gen. i. 28-30 ; ii. 16, 17), it is enough to justify the inference that there was then pleasant and happy intercourse between him and them. They were not afraid of him. Their sense of his presence with them made them happy. The thought that his eye was upon them gave them neither shame nor solicitude. The sound of his voice did not alarm them, but rejoiced them. In nothing could they be more painfully conscious of the change which their

act of transgression had wrought in themselves, than in their changed feelings toward God. Now his voice startles them, terrifies them—makes them shrink, and shiver, and hide. They are conscious that the happy connection between their own spirits and the Father of spirits is broken. There is a break between them and him—a separation. They are away from God, to whom they have beforetime been so near; and how strange it seems that the immediate effect of this is to make them wish to get farther away—as far away as they can!

Ages afterward, the patriarch Job, describing the prosperous wicked men, the worldlings of his time, says: "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." He put into these plain words what they perhaps would not thus speak, but what they said by their habitual behaviour, by "actions, which speak louder than words." No form of words could more adequately express the habitual feeling of those who find their pleasure in wickedness. Without reasoning about it, without distinctly thinking about it, they instinctively shrink from God; they take no pleasure in the thought of his presence with them; they would gladly be out of his presence; they would gladly have nothing *to do with him.*

Still later, the prophet Isaiah, commissioned to address God's people concerning their unhappy spiritual condition, a condition in which they felt that God's hand did not reach them, to bestow gifts and benediction, as aforetime, assures them that this is not because his arm is shortened, or his ear heavy: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you" (Isa. lix. 1, 2).

Paul, writing to those in Ephesus who had been converted from dismal idolatry, referring to their former evil and forlorn state, reaches the very climax of his powerful description when he declares that they were "without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12).

We may get a more just impression of this by noticing the contrast of it with an opposite spiritual condition, which is represented in Scripture by an opposite figure.

Of that antediluvian saint who so pleased God that he would not let him "taste of death," but translated him, the pregnant record is—"And Enoch *walked with God*" (Gen. v. 24). When Abraham "sojourned in Gerar," and had for some time been observed by king Abimelech and his chief captain, they said to Abraham, "*God is with thee in all that thou doest*" (Gen. xxi. 22). When

God revealed himself to Jacob at Beth-el, speaking down to him from the top of that wondrous stair-way up and down which he saw the angels going, in the promise which God there made to him, nothing else seems so precious as that which is expressed in the words, "*I am with thee*" (Gen. xxviii. 15). When Joseph had been sold by his brethren, and unjustly disgraced and imprisoned in Egypt, he was not unhappy; for "*the Lord was with him*" (Gen. xxxix. 21). To be with God—to have God with us—expresses the happiest, the most blessed condition possible for finite spirits.

Sin breaks this happy connection of the soul with God. Sin separates the soul from God. Sin is separation or departure from God.

Let us try to understand the true and full import of this. The terms "separation" and "departure" are primarily terms of matter and of space. To depart, is to go or remove from one point or location to another; to separate, is to remove one body or one part of a body from another—to remove two bodies or two parts of a body in opposite directions, or to remove one, leaving the other where it was. A person departs from a place or from another person when he goes away; that is, removes himself to some *other place*. Two persons are separated when a

material barrier (for example, a wall) is placed between them through which they cannot have communication, or when they are placed at such a distance from each other that they cannot have communication. Empty space, if there be enough of it, is as effectual a barrier as a granite wall.

By an easy and natural process our minds pass from this primary meaning of these terms in their application to matter, to an intelligible application of them to spirits. There may be other than material barriers between two persons, effectually preventing communication between them—at least all happy communication—while their bodies are near together, and no wall or even so much as a curtain is between them. Two souls may be conscious of mutual aversion, or mutual repulsion. These, also, are terms primarily applied to matter and space. “Aversion” is turning away; “repulsion” is driving apart, or driving back. How significant we all feel these terms to be of that of which we are conscious in being brought into the presence of one whom we dislike—who is uncongenial! To be attracted to a person—to be repelled from a person—these expressions are as readily understood as the same terms are understood when applied to a magnet, or to an elastic ball rebounding *from a hard surface*. We all feel the sig-

nificance of them so readily that attempts to explain them would be superfluous.

What is it that draws two souls together? What is it that drives two souls apart? It is impossible to answer this without knowing the character of the souls. Says a classical Roman writer: "To like and to dislike the same things, this is firm friendship." The fact that two persons like the same things, and dislike the same things, is proof that they are alike in their tastes. Attracted to the same things, repelled by the same things, they must have the same susceptibilities toward those objects. It is to be expected that they will be drawn to each other. But when one likes what the other dislikes—when one's attraction is the other's aversion—how can they be kept together? They may be violently forced into bodily proximity; but no force can bring their minds together or overcome their mutual repulsion.

To be not attracted to a good being—to be repelled from him—what does this show? The infinitely good Being, infinite in "wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth"—to be averse to him, to dislike him, to shrink from him, to desire to hide from him, to say to him, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways"—what must all this show *in respect to the spiritual state of those in whom all this*

is experienced? Such is the spiritual state which sin naturally induces; such is the spiritual state of sinners. It is proper and truthful to say that sin is aversion to God, separation from God, departure from God.

But God is "the Father of our spirits." We have derived our being from him; and only by his continual upholding can we continue to exist. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." We cannot really go away from him. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. cxxxix. 7-10). It is impossible to go, even in thought, anywhere beyond God. There is nowhere beyond him, nowhere where he is not. How wretched then, and how hopeless, is that creature who cannot be happy where God is; who would like to find a place beyond him—would like to go utterly away from him! To dwell in the same house, to eat at the same table, to occupy the same chamber, to be constantly in company with one whom you dislike, from whom, however near your bodies may be, your soul turns away in aversion—*what a weary and loathed life that would*

be! To know yourself the creature of God, living and moving and having your being in him; and to have that in you which is most offensive to him, and the necessary effect of which upon you is to make you turn from him in utter aversion,—can you think of any other so great misery? Sin is just that. Unchecked, uncured, it goes steadily on to that. It is, in its completion, utter and hopeless estrangement from God. And in all less degrees it proportionately mars the soul's relations to God; proportionately alienates or estranges the soul from God.

We have before considered sin with reference to law, and have found that any deviation from the law of God, any want of conformity to it, is sin, as really as any direct and positive transgression. We found the old and obsolete word *anomy*, or un-law, expressive of it. But what is "law"? Is it not the expression of the will of God? Whatever variety of theories there may be in respect to the ultimate principle of moral obligation—however some may think that God's will constitutes right, and others may insist that there is an eternal right to which God's will spontaneously conforms, and that therein is its excellence—surely the latter no less than the former hold and insist that the actual, expressed *will of God* evermore is perfect law, a perfect and

infallible rule to all his rational creatures. To be or to do wrong, then, is inevitably to be at variance with God. All will agree to this who believe in God at all—all who are not atheists.

And what a dreadful thing it must be to be an atheist! I have conversed with a man who earnestly repelled the imputation of atheism; who considered it an affront to be called an atheist, and yet he said that he did not know whether there is any God or not. He would hold the term atheist to the definition, "one who disbelieves or denies the existence of a God;" and so, as he neither denied nor affirmed, he would not be called by that name. It is not worth while to dispute about that definition, though I cannot help agreeing with those writers who think that it would be a more exact use of terms, to call all who do not positively believe in God atheists, and to call those who positively disbelieve, or who deny that there is a God, anti-theists. But what I now ask you to consider is, the forlorn condition of both those classes of minds—call them atheists or anti-theists, or call them by whatever name they themselves may wish to be called by—people who have no positive belief in God—who cannot say, "Our Father which art in heaven," and put any real meaning into the dear phrase. How much more dismal is it, after all,

to be an orphan, and to know that you are, than not to know whether you are an orphan or not?

In one of the passages of Scripture which I have cited (Eph. ii. 12), Paul speaks of some "having no hope, and without God in the world." The word which Paul used, and which is translated, "without God," is *ἀθεοι* (atheoi), which to even an English ear sounds like atheists. It is formed by prefixing to the Greek word for God that which (as I have before explained) has the same effect as the syllable "*un*" prefixed to any word in our language. They were people who had no God. The word "godless" might express this, just as the word "fatherless" expresses the idea of one who has no father. It has come to pass, however, in our usage, that godless means ungodly. We apply it not so commonly to those who do not believe that there is a God, as to those who do not obey him; who act as if they did not care for him—as if they did not care whether there is any God or not.

After all, is there not a natural connection between this intellectual darkness and this moral recklessness? It is not exemplified in every individual. There are some amiable men, some kind-hearted and fair-dealing men, men of clean lips and lives, whose *minds are* obscured by atheistic doubts, or pantheistic,

which are not very different. And there are men who have no doubt about the real being of God, who live very badly, very godlessly. They are not governed in their lives by their theism ; not governed by their own view of what God requires, or of what would be pleasing to him. This I admit, and yet I am confident that all must regard this as anomalous, and that it is much more natural and much more common for atheistic unbelief to be associated with moral recklessness. I do not so much think that speculative atheism causes moral recklessness as that it is caused or produced by it. I have no doubt that it works both ways ; but I think that moral recklessness more evidently and more frequently leads to atheism than it springs out of it. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," most frequently when he has wished that there were none—when the thought of a holy and just Being above him, who hates sin, has made him afraid. Loving sin, he would fain believe that there is no God to punish sin. So sin alienates from God ; makes the sinner averse to God ; makes him dislike God ; makes him disbelieve in him. Nor do I believe that this effect is confined to those cases in which there is a conscious desire or endeavour to disbelieve. Sin naturally works in the soul this ill effect, an *estrangement*, an alienation, a departure of

the soul from God. I might have adduced this as a phase of the *disease* which I affirmed sin to be, and it is a terrible phase of it. Is there any more terrible morbidness of mind than that so often exemplified in insanity; the strong, sometimes deadly, aversion to those who before were, and who still deserve to be, most loved and trusted? Our comfort in such cases is in the hope that the delirium will be temporary; that the insane delusion will pass away "as a dream when one awaketh." What wreck and ruin would it be to have such an alienation last for ever!

This delirium of sin, this morbid alienation of mind from God which sin is—there is danger that it will last for ever. There is a liability of being given up to it hopelessly. To those who persist in saying by their actions to God, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," the time is coming when God—even God the Redeemer, who is now saying so graciously, "*Come unto me*"—will say, "Depart from me." Nor can there a more dismal doom fall on any finite spirit,—to go *away* from God, away from Christ, away from light, away from holiness, away from peace, away from hope, "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."


All sin tends that way. A sinful character kept, at length inevitably snaps asunder every cord that binds to good, at length nullifies every attraction that holds to hope and to God.

Do not risk it. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."

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CHAPTER V.

SIN AS AN INHERITANCE.

O inherit anything is to receive it by descent from an ancestor ; to receive, as his heir, that which has been the property of another, usually an ancestor. An inheritance is whatever is or may be inherited, whatever is derived by an heir from an ancestor. We usually apply it to property or rank, or something which is valuable. Under our American laws, children inherit, in equal portions, the property left by parents at their death, unless by the will of the parents some different distribution or disposal is made. In some other countries the eldest son inherits much more than an equal share of an estate ; and in countries where rank is hereditary, it descends in the line of the first-born. We do not, however, wholly confine these terms to valuable possessions. They may be applied, intelligibly and without impropriety, to whatever a person

naturally has, because his parents, or either of them, had it.

Thus children are said to inherit either the honour or the shame of parents. They inherit their good or their bad dispositions, they inherit health or disease—a sound and vigorous or a morbid and feeble physical constitution. The kindred word *hereditary* is perhaps oftener used in this wider meaning. Certainly we speak not only of hereditary property and hereditary rights, but of hereditary pride, hereditary bravery, hereditary disease.

All this comes naturally from the hereditary manner in which we have our being. There would be nothing of this sort in a world fully peopled at once by creative power, peopled with mature creatures, all equals in age, and all having derived their being directly from God. Existing as we in fact do, in successive generations, each transmitting its life to the succeeding, it was to be expected that many incidents and liabilities of being and life would be transmitted also. This is the evident fact, and it is recognized in the Scriptures.

The begetting of offspring by the first man is said to have been “in his own likeness, after his image.” That first man having become a sinner—being, after his first act of *sin*, evermore in a state of *sin*—it is

solemnly written in the New Testament that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It is also written that "by one man's offence death reigned by one;" and that "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners."

We here enter a region of thought in which perplexing questions spring up very thickly—a region, too, in which there has been much theological controversy. It is not at all my purpose, however, to engage in any such controversy; for I remember Paul's charge—"That we strive not about words to no profit, to the subverting of the hearers"(2 Tim. ii. 14). I seriously think that very much of the theological controversy which has arisen on the subject has been just such "striving about words" as that against which Paul in that text warns us. I wish to bring forward certain facts, revealed in Scripture or attested by our own consciousness or observation—that is, by our observation of others and of ourselves. I propose a serious study of such facts:—

1. It is an evident fact that we do inherit mental and moral characteristics from our parents as truly as physical characteristics. We as confidently look *for resemblances of children to their parents in mind*

and manners, in disposition and character, as in stature, in features, and in complexion. "Like begets like" is a received maxim, which has its fulfilment not oftener nor more strikingly in respect to the body than in respect to the soul. Personal beauty, agility, strength on the one hand, and personal ugliness, infirmity, or deformity on the other, are often hereditary. No one will dispute this; and I think it will almost as readily and generally be admitted that strength, regularity, or soundness of mind, and weakness, disorder, or perversity of mind are hereditary also. We have these various characters as our parents had them, and because they had them, quite as evidently in our souls as in our bodies. We need not exaggerate this. We ought not. Education can doubtless greatly modify natural traits of character. So also can physical training do much to modify physical characteristics. We are not able always accurately to discriminate what education has done for us from what we have by nature and from birth; but certainly no candid and careful observer will doubt that it makes at least as real a difference to us from what parents we derive our being as by what nurses and teachers we are brought up. However we may magnify the importance of education, the power of *example*, etc., none of us can wholly rid

our minds, if we would, of the thought expressed in the terse maxim, "*Blood tells.*"

2. It is equally certain that what we thus inherit from our parents is not altogether the same which it would have been if our parents had not been sinners. Filial love and dutifulness, no doubt, incline and require us to turn our eyes away from our parents' faults, and not to cherish or indulge censorious thoughts of them; but what wise and honest parent would wish his child to believe him free from faults? What thoughtful parent is able to doubt that, begetting a child "in his own likeness, after his image," he transmits to him unhappy and bad traits of character? There can nothing be gained by shutting our eyes to this. It is a fact that we all have inherited evil from our parents, and do transmit evil to our children; not only physical evil, pertaining to our bodies, but moral evil, pertaining to our character.

3. It is a fact that this evil inheritance has come down to us, through all the generations of mankind, all the sad way from Adam and Eve. This is clearly enough attested in the Bible. From its narrative of the fall of our first parents by eating the forbidden fruit, in all its account of mankind, in their successive *generations*, it carries all along the plain assumption

that mankind are naturally inclined to evil ; that, as a race, they are fallen away from God. The universal idea is, that like begets like ; that every living creature produces offspring after its kind. The constant proclivity of children to sin is accounted for by their descent from parents having the same proclivity. And when, in the New Testament, an inspired apostle is treating of this deep question, he clearly affirms the universal sinfulness of mankind, and as clearly ascribes the sad fact to the sin of Adam as its cause (Rom. v.).

4. Another fact in the case is, that sin does not lose its proper character by being hereditary. It does not cease to be sin by being accounted for in the way we have seen, any more than virtue ceases to be virtue by being accounted for in the same way. I have made acquaintance with some persons whose character greatly pleased me. When I have expressed such pleasure, in some instances, to persons knowing them, I have been told that the same character was notably exemplified in their parents, whom I never saw. My informants have not expected nor desired thus to abate from my satisfaction with such characters. They have not expected nor wished that I should less highly esteem an industrious, honest, amiable man, by reason of being informed

that his father before him was just such a man. Such information accounts for my neighbour's possession of a noble character, but does not alter it, nor alter any one's estimation of it.

On the other hand, if you know an unamiable, lazy, dishonest man, do you dislike him less, or blame him less, or estimate him any more favourably, because you know him also to be "a chip of the old block," a worthless child of a worthless father? No; character is character still, however acquired. The mysterious law by which the character of a parent goes so far to determine what the child's character shall be, does not thereby change or affect the nature of character. Character is evermore personal. Responsibility is evermore in the individual.

There have been attempts to obscure this, in order to evade responsibility; and such attempts have, I fear, been aided by some theological speculations. There have been affirmations of personal responsibility for the sin of Adam, in each individual of his posterity, which the Scriptures do not warrant, and to which our natural consciences do not respond; and I cannot help thinking that this has made it easier for some, reversing the process of thought, to throw off from themselves, in part, the sense of *responsibility* for their own sins—to throw it back

upon ancestors from whom they have inherited sinful dispositions or inclinations.

This is signally and sharply rebuked by the prophet Ezekiel: "The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have *occasion* any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. xviii. 1-4).

Likewise, in the New Testament, the same inspired writer who has spoken most strongly of the disastrous consequence of the first man's sin to his entire race, says, in the very tone of Ezekiel: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. xiv. 12).

This organic unity of the family and of the race does not obliterate nor confuse the sharp and clear distinctions of personal responsibility. Each individual of the race must answer for himself to God for all that he does; and must be estimated by God for just what he is, in his distinct individuality, no less distinctly and no less solemnly than if he were the only *responsible* creature in existence. This

thought clearly held, as the Bible plainly and solemnly and abundantly teaches, and as our own consciences testify, should prevent us from perverting the facts concerning our inheritance of sin to the confusion of our ideas of responsibility, or the blunting of the sense of responsibility. Yet we should not overlook those facts. They are of solemn import. The scriptural view of them will go far to make us appreciate the wretchedness of the spiritual condition in which we are by nature, and the infinite importance of being divinely delivered from it. For certainly, the more correctly we apprehend this truth, the more fully shall we know that there can be no human deliverance.

The fact is that this entire race is a sinful race. Not merely the individual man Adam and the individual woman Eve did, each of them, an act of sin, and thereby fell into a state of sin; but that pair, who then were all mankind; that pair, from whom all mankind were to descend, begotten and born "in their likeness, after their image," fell by their sin from the estate in which they were created. That fall, that loss, that breaking away from God, was an immense calamity to the race. Adam and Eve, when they sinned and fell, were the whole race, the only *embodiment* of this human nature. It lapsed into

moral ruin in them; and it is in us, all their posterity, what it became in them.

Shall I blame God for constituting the human nature thus, under such an awful and infinite liability? "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

With God's assurance that I shall answer to him for only my own sins, and with the consciousness, which I can never lose, that my sins are responsibly only my own, it would be rash indeed in me to criticise his construction of my being. But beyond this, it seems evident to me that God has manifested a most wise benevolence in constituting us as he has, and giving us such a wonderful connection with each other in the unity of the human race.

Certainly the solemn social liability to be so fearfully affected by each other, is closely connected with a social opportunity that is unspeakably precious.

When tempted to murmur at the exposure to which my relation to others has subjected me, I have asked myself, Would I willingly be exempt from this exposure? Would I willingly have all human relations and human susceptibilities so changed that no one could suffer for the sin of another? Would I willingly be so made that it

would make no difference to me how my father, my brother, my child should behave? Or, on the other hand, would I choose to have the nature, the heart of my child, my brother, my wife such that my committing some great crime would bring no pain, no shame, no harm to them? Nay, verily; if there is anything in our nature for which we should thank him who so made us, it is that he has made us so much to each other; that he has so made us that we so largely live not only for each other, but in each other. Sooner far would I have all sensibility gone from my right arm, to secure me from the liability of pain from hurting it, than be deprived of all this sensitiveness of affection, to escape pain and harm from the wrong-doing of those I love. Yes, I deliberately say it; I am glad and thankful that I am so united to others in this mysterious solidarity of life that the wrong-doing of one of them, the loss of character in one of them, would give me unspeakable pain. I would rather bear any pain which my heart can bear, than be the monster I must be if I could not feel such pain. Yes; and on the other hand, my love for those I love best does not make me wish them to be exempt from suffering from any wrong-doing into which I might be successfully tempted. I *should be sorry* not to feel sure that loss of character

in me would give unspeakable pain to those in my home, and to many more. Surely I should be impoverished of my richest treasures if assured that such a disaster to me would distress none but me. I have no fear that any one will deem this a selfish feeling; for certainly I can see no way in which we could be exempted from this social liability, except by making each of us utterly selfish, utterly incapable of social affection. Thank God, he has not made us so. Thank God that such social union, such union of interests, of feelings, of hearts is possible and actual, in human homes, in human society, in human life. We would not give up this glorious possibility, even to escape the dreadful attendant liability.

But it would be very foolish not to regard this liability. Through this, our entire race has fallen into an abyss of sin and misery out of which we can never climb. By nature we are in fact a ruined race. Nature has no salvation for us. Nature has broken under us, like an iron bridge; and we have all fallen into a chasm up whose icy sides not one of us can climb. We all went down in the terrible Fall. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Yes, all have sinned, Jew and Gentile, Celt and Saxon, European and African, Asiatic and

American, savage and civilized, degraded and refined—"there is no difference"—"all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."


Do not let us waste time, opportunity, life, in thinking of the unimportant differences between us; in thinking how unlike other men we are—how much less degraded, how much less abandoned, how much less guilty. We are all by nature ruined. We are all down in the dark and slippery gorge, and the consuming fire is not far away.

There is One "able to save to the uttermost." Let us not cherish the vain delusion that only a part of our number need his help. We all need it—all of us—all mankind.

If any of us have not availed ourselves of that saving help, let us do so without any further delay. So many of us as have availed ourselves of it—how much can we do for the rescue of others; others at our doors; others, no matter how far away?

CHAPTER VI.

SIN AS A DELUSION.

E shall not have an adequate view of sin, without taking into account the illusions which belong to it, and carefully studying them.

It is a great aggravation of any evil or danger that it is deceptive, that it easily conceals itself and works on unseen. We are more afraid of "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," than of "the destruction that wasteth at noon-day."

In war, an invading force is dangerous in proportion to its leader's ability to keep its numbers and resources and his own plans of campaign concealed. A disease is the more dangerous, if its symptoms are not understood, nor the circumstances which promote it, nor the remedies for it. A bad man, or a pernicious organization, is likely to do harm in a community, in proportion to the ability of the one or the

other to appear harmless, or even useful. Anything of evil character and tendency is deprived of much of its bad power when it is fully understood.

This is obvious. Many of the best maxims of prudence, in warfare and in ordinary life, are founded on it. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed." Successful reconnoissance gives the best hope of victory in the coming battle. To see correctly what you have to avoid gives you the best opportunity to avoid it.

All that we have seen of sin—as an act, as a state, as a disease, as departure from God, and as an inheritance—all this is greatly aggravated by its *delusiveness*.

Sin is delusive in two ways.

1. *In regard to its results.* Those who sin commonly do so in the expectation of results seeming to them desirable, which seldom, if ever, are realized. So was it with the first human sin. It was to open the eyes to knowledge of good and evil, exalting Adam and Eve from their feeble and low human state, and making a pair of gods of them. It did open their eyes to their own nakedness, and loaded their spirits with shame and guilt. It has been the same ever since. Nothing is more plainly taught in *the Bible*, *nothing* is more evident from experience,

than that the enjoyment which is expected to result from any form of sinful indulgence is never realized. The person who has yielded to such an inducement to sin always finds that he has been deluded. The promise of pleasure is not fulfilled. The promised pleasure utterly fails in many cases; and when it does not, it falls far below the expectation, or is soon followed by imbittering or sickening pain.

How notoriously is this true of all forms of unlawful sensual indulgence! Who that ever yielded to the solicitations of appetite, and transgressed God's commandment for the sake of the gratification of appetite, has failed to experience painful disappointment in respect to the pleasure thus secured? No one was ever thus made really content and happy. On the other hand, such sinful indulgence is always followed by unhappy consequences that were not looked for.

This has been the frequent subject of thrilling description and of eloquent appeal with reference to the appetite for intoxicating drinks. The formation of this appetite and the habit of indulging it, so almost imperceptible in the beginning, how terrible does it become in the fulness of its mature strength! how utterly ruinous in its final issue!

The same is true substantially of all forms of

profligacy, all forms and modes of sinful indulgence. Every such indulgence allures with promises of much greater pleasure than is ever realized; and "at the last," it may truly be said of every one of them, "it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

This statement is applicable not only to the gross and revolting forms of sin; it is no less true of every sinful disposition that is ever indulged. The spirit of selfishness (whatever form it takes) subjects the mind to the same delusion. Ambition promises to bless and to satisfy the soul; but it commonly tosses and shakes, and often wrecks it. The selfishly ambitious man, in proportion to his success, becomes lonely and desolate. Avarice allures with gilded hopes; but it dries and withers the spirit, and when its utmost aspirations are realized, the soul is pinched with the worst poverty. Worldly gaiety and fashion, all forms and types of worldliness, allure with promises of enjoyment which are never fulfilled; and they cheat the soul that pursues them out of the real good which, but for them, it might have sought and found. There is no sinful course in which he who pursues it will not fail of the enjoyment which he hoped for, and reap much bitter fruit.

2. *In regard to its own character.* Sin does not *commonly* avow itself as sin. More commonly it

puts on the garb of virtue. The illusions of sin upon the mind in this respect are many, and they are wonderful. He who sins does not always nor often squarely face his sin, and confess to himself that he is sinning. There is scarcely any sin which does not so disguise itself as to seem almost innocent to him who allows himself to listen to its blandishments, to stand within the sphere of its fascination. Nothing is more common than for the guilty not to feel their guilt, or to feel it very feebly and inadequately. Nothing is more difficult than to bring men to a right estimate of their own character. If every person who commits sin, every time he commits it were to see and feel just how guilty he is in committing it, sin would appear to every one a hideous, horrid thing. No one could have a moment's peace or a moment's ease in sinning. The most miserable feeling of which our human hearts are capable is the sense of guilt.

But there is in sin the power of blinding the mind of him who commits it to its own moral deformity. A person may in fact be very guilty, and be not at all or very slightly sensible of his guilt. A person may sin long and greatly with no adequate conviction of his own sinfulness.

Such is the deceitfulness of sin. It deludes the

soul, both as to its own nature and as to the results which will flow from it.

This may easily be illustrated and verified from common observation and experience. Whenever you have yielded to a temptation to any sinful indulgence, have you not uniformly been disappointed? Did any pleasure thus obtained ever satisfy you, or fulfil the expectation whereby you were misled? Did the pleasure resulting from any sin, in your experience, ever prove equal to what you had been led to expect? And was there not always a sequel of remorse or of shame, or at least of uneasiness and discontent, of which, in the excitement of temptation and indulgence, you had no adequate foreboding?

If those who are now excited by sinful allurements, with hopes of pleasure from sinning, would but listen to those who have tried it, they would be convinced that happiness is not to be found that way. "It is all vanity and vexation of spirit."

That other and worse delusion, wherein sin blinds men to its own sinfulness, is as readily illustrated from experience. There are many persons living in known and habitual disobedience to God, in habitual neglect of known and confessed duties, who yet do not feel themselves to be sinners—who think themselves really good-hearted. They excuse themselves,

justify themselves, value themselves. They claim to be esteemed as honest, humane, generous, virtuous, worthy of high esteem, although they are living in neglect of God, prayerless, and careless toward him.

They do not feel guilty about this. They do not feel at all as they imagine they would feel if they had committed crimes or were practising vices. They seem to suppose that there is a great difference in this respect between those sins which violate the rights of our fellow-men, or which are destructive to society or disgraceful in society, and those sins of heart which are directly and only against God. In words they may confess, or at least in words they will not deny, that obligations to God are the highest and most sacred of all obligations; and yet they do not feel guilty for violating or disregarding these, as they presume that they would feel for wronging their fellow-men, or practising any gross vice, such as profanity, drunkenness, or lewdness.

This is utterly a mistake. Persons actually guilty of gross vices are quite as apt to be torpid as to the guilt of them, and the worst crimes sometimes dull and blunt the conscience marvellously. I have never met with a self-satisfaction more difficult to disturb than that of a man whose neighbours looked upon him as conspicuously wicked—a profane, coarse, reck-

less man. Even in prospect of dying soon, he avowed his readiness to meet God, on the ground that he had never done anything with which a just God should be offended to any serious or alarming extent. I have never tried harder, or with less success, to awaken any human consciences to a sense of guilt, than those of two murderers, whom I visited, and instructed, and prayed with for months, and until "their feet lost their hold upon the scaffold."

You, who read this with surprise, and perhaps think yourself incapable of crime, if under temptation you should become a criminal, might probably at first be tortured with paroxysms of remorse; but if left to sink deep in crime and become used to it, it is probable that you would feel as little conscious guilt and self-condemnation as you feel now. It is the very character of sin to blind the eyes and delude the minds of its victims. Nothing is more characteristic of it, nothing is more evil and harmful in it, than this deceptive, deluding, blinding power.

The explanation of this delusive power of sin is not difficult. The natural selfishness of our hearts indisposes us to look candidly at the evidences of our own guilt. Notoriously, we do not see ourselves as others see us;—how unlikely are we to see ourselves as God sees us! We love ourselves out of all

proportion to our real worthiness. It is painful to feel guilty. It is the most miserable feeling we can have. Naturally we shrink from it. Naturally we turn our minds away from those contemplations which would bring this feeling upon us. This unwillingness to feel guilty goes far to account for our failing to feel so in any just proportion to our actual occasion for feeling so. It prevents the mind from taking a thoroughly candid position, from opening itself fully to conviction. There is inevitably a prejudice in favour of ourselves when we are called to sit in judgment upon ourselves.

Another reason for this lack of a due sense of guilt is found in the very nature of conscience, that power or susceptibility through which alone we are capable of either a conviction or a feeling of guilt. We may regard it as both a power and a susceptibility. As a susceptibility, as a capability of *feeling*, like every other, it can be blunted, can have its sensibility gradually diminished till it is quite gone, like the sense of feeling from fingers that have become slowly accustomed to handle hot iron. Unquestionably, the practice of sin gradually benumbs the conscience. It deadens its sensibility. That is a fearful state of the soul, but it is the state toward which all habitual sinning tends—all habitual doing

of wrong, and all habitual neglect of duty. And it is just as true of sin that is not socially disgraceful as of that which is so. It is just as true of sin in the heart, between the heart and God, as of that which breaks out toward our fellow-men in wrongs and outrages, in crimes or in vices. "Take heed, brethren,lest any of you be *hardened* through the *deceitfulness* of sin." No one is likely to handle iron that is *red* hot, or coals that are brightly glowing. One may in haste and heedlessness touch them when they are black, and still hot enough to harden and deaden the skin. We have no right to be heedless: there are other ways of knowing whether coals are hot, besides the glowing colour; there are other ways of knowing that an action or a course of action is sinful and will hurt our consciences, besides its being odious and disgraceful in human society. We are bound to be attentive and obedient to the very whispers of conscience, not merely to its loud outcries in full chorus with the indignant clamour of the public. If we will subject our souls to this slow, sure hardening, it should be no wonder that we find them blinded also. It is no wonder that when sin has hardened us it can then easily deceive us.

Sin spoils the soul: sin ruins the soul. Its *destructive work* is constantly going on in this world;

and that world in which its work is finished is "the bottomless pit."

This hardening and blinding effect of sin is one of its worst. It blinds by hardening, and then the victim is easily led and pushed on toward that pit.

There is a form of bodily blindness which resembles this. The eye retains its natural form and colour, just as in health. No film covers it: no cataract darkens it: no inflammation reddens, and swells, and closes it. Physicians call this disease *amaurosis*. That is a Greek word for simple *darkness*. They also call it by a Latin name—*gutta serena* (drop serene); and Milton in his great poem, in that famous passage in which he refers, with infinite pathos, to his own loss of vision, says of his own sightless eyeballs,—

"So thick a *drop serene* has quenched their orbs,
Or dim suffusion veiled."

He seems to have been uncertain which of two different diseases had consigned him to perpetual darkness. But that which he describes by the terms "drop serene" does consign to utter darkness one whose eyes may still be whole and fair for others to look upon. It is defined as "a loss or decay of sight, without any visible defect in the eye, usually from loss of power in the optic nerve"—that quick thread.


expanded in the back of the eye into a living canvas, on which all our objects of sight are pictured, and the vivid sense of them telegraphed through the finely throbbing brain, unto the conscious indwelling spirit. That marvellous nerve has lost its vivid power. It is quenched: it is dead. Eyes thus quenched then

"Roll in vain
To find light's piercing ray, and find no dawn."

Even thus may the soul be blinded by the amaurosis of sin.

CHAPTER VII.

SIN AS A DOOM.

UR study of sin will not be complete without a serious inquiry concerning the final issue and consummation of it. We have seen that, as an act, it is utterly wrong; is in violation of the supreme authority and the perfect law of God our Maker. We have seen that it is a permanently evil and culpable state of the soul; that whosoever hath sinned is a sinner; whosoever has done what he ought not to do, is what he ought not to be. We have seen that sin is a corruption, a distortion, a morbid condition of the human faculties, the worst of all *diseases*. We have seen that it is departure, separation, alienation of the soul from the God who made it, union and communion with whom would be its highest, even its perfect blessedness. We cannot avoid nor repress the question: "*What shall come of all this?*" "*What shall the harvest*

be?" The Bible has not left us without an answer to this question. I try here to present that answer by gathering from the Bible at large the teaching which characterizes it.

I. The Bible treats of sin as belonging to that part of our human nature which is immortal. It does not disregard its connection with the body, nor its effects upon the body. We read in the Book of Job (xx. 11) of "the bones of the wicked being full of the sins of his youth;" and if you will visit a good anatomical museum, they will show you human bones swollen and distorted into such monstrous and hideous shapes as do constitute a most impressive warning against a sin to which youth is everywhere fearfully tempted. We read also in the Book of Proverbs (xxiii. 29) of the "wounds without cause" and the "redness of eyes," as well as of the "babbling" and the "sorrow" and the "contentions" of them "who tarry long at the wine, that go to seek mixed wine." We have seen how the Bible, in both Testaments, in its revelation of the Redeemer, connects human sins and human sicknesses in its account of the burden which he bore for mankind. Yet it nowhere makes the impression that sin is of the body; that the body sins. Sin, as an act, is an act of intelligence and of *free will*. It is an act which can only be done by a

rational and voluntary being. A machine cannot sin. A beast cannot sin. You cannot think of a beast, or a machine, or a tornado, or a volcano, or a whirlpool, or typhoid fever, or the cholera, as a sinner. You dread them for the harm they do. You never blame them for wrong-doing. There is no broader distinction in human thought than that between a physical hurt and a moral wrong; between a physically harmful thing and a morally wrong thing; between injury and sin. You always think of sin as an act or a state of the soul, not of the body. It is not, then, something that is finally disposed of by the dissolution of the body. However deformed, disordered, poisoned, the body may be, and however loathsome the process of its dissolution, when that process is finished, the hideousness and the loathsomeness are gone. "Earth to earth, dust to dust;" then there are no forms of beauty, nor of sweetness, nor of life into which that dust may not again enter. But hideousness, deformity, disease of soul do not end thus. The Bible habitually gives the impression that the soul continues, after the body's dissolution, the same in character which it was before. The Bible, Jesus Christ speaking in the Bible, has brought clearly out the grand fact of the soul's immortality. The pagan philosophers hoped for it. The natural

yearnings and longings of the soul do doubtless "intimate eternity to man." But it is the Bible, "the word of God written," which has made the immortality of the soul a certainty. It is "Jesus Christ who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). The Bible gives us the assurance that in and after the body's dissolution, the soul lives on, and awaits the reconstruction and revivification of the body, "in the resurrection, at the last day." Now it is this undying, indestructible part of us—it is our spiritual being, to which sin belongs; sin is an act and a state of the soul, the immortal human spirit.

II. Sin is a power in the universe, in human life and experience, which operates, like other powers, under an established law of cause and effect. Just as gunpowder embosoms a force which, when awakened by the touch of fire, will rend to fragments the rock in which you have imprisoned it, or drive forward with terrific swiftness the ball that lies before it in the gun-barrel; just as seed has in it a power which, in appropriate conditions of soil and warmth and moisture, will generate and uplift and mature the stalks and the ears of a harvest; just as this *process is regular and determinate*, under an ascer-

tainable and intelligible law, so that the kind and quality of the seed predetermine the kind and quality of the harvest; so is sin a power, which works on, under its own law, and works out, in human experience, certain definite and ascertainable effects.

"They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (Job iv. 8). "He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity" (Prov. xxii. 8). "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hos. viii. 7). "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 7, 8).

III. The result toward which sin works, the final effect of which it is the cause, the ripe harvest of which it is the seed, is *death*: "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James i. 15).

What do we, what should we mean by this word? We apply it properly to that destructive consummation of disease or of violence which separates the soul from the body, and gives up the body to speedy dissolution. We cannot help connecting this bodily

death, in our thoughts, with the sad fact of sin. We believe that sin brought this into the world. Without sin, we do not indeed know that life in this world might not have had a limit, and come regularly to an end. The actual experience of Enoch and of Elijah, as recorded in the Old Testament, shows that God could have transferred us all, if we had been sinless, to some other sphere of being, without our tasting of death. Or, if so he pleased, he could have brought about the separation of our souls from our bodies with no such accompanying pain and horror as those with which, in our actual experience, death is invested. Doubtless he could have ordained that we all should fall asleep painlessly at the end of our appointed time upon the earth, and awake in heaven, unembodied, or with our bodies transfigured and glorified, as the body of the Lord was upon the mount, as it was when he ascended, and as the bodies of those saints shall be who are alive at Christ's final coming, "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52).

Whatever such experiences there might have been of sinless men—of transition to other worlds or spheres of being—they would not have been death. We cannot believe that there would have entered

into the experience of sinless beings any such horror as this, to which we give the name of *death*. In this proper and impressive sense, then, the death of our bodies is, no doubt, an effect of sin, a consequence of our sinfulness. It is also true that indulgence in sin, sinning "with a high hand," very commonly hastens bodily death, and fearfully aggravates all the natural horror and pain of it. This is especially and notably so in respect to some particular forms of sin, as drunkenness and lewdness.

But is this death of the body, this quenching of animal life and dissolution of the animal frame, all that we mean by *death*? Is it all that we ought to mean? Is it all that the Bible means? Is it all that God meant when he said to Adam, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.....in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*"? or when by the mouth of Ezekiel he said, and by the pen of Ezekiel caused it to be written for all ages, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"? Nay; you cannot begin to put all the solemn intimations, all the dread forebodings, all the plain declarations of the Bible into that supposition. Take, for example, these words of Jesus: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body

in hell" (Matt. x. 28). The Lord Jesus believed in something beyond the death of the body, more terrible than the death of the body; so much more terrible that, in comparison, this seemed to him not to be dreaded at all. Did he know what he was saying? Ah! he knew of a killing of the soul, quite other than its violent and painful disruption from the body. He knew of a death beyond this bodily, which he described as the *destruction* of "both soul and body in hell." *Destruction!* Let your mind dwell on that fearful word. Can you reach and grasp all its meaning—all its meaning when applied to such a thing as your soul—to such a being as yourself?

"What is a man profited," Jesus asked, "if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" So Matthew reports his saying, who probably heard it from his own lips (Matt. xvi. 26). Another inspired writer, reporting the same saying, gives it in these words: "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" (Luke ix. 25.) That shows how men of that time understood the Lord. To lose the soul is to lose yourself. It is to be a lost man; not a lost man in a deep wilderness; not a lost man in a wintry storm, *in the midst* of a broad prairie; not a lost man on

the fragment of a wreck far out on the sea; but a lost man in Eternity! That is just what it will be to "die in your sins," as Jesus declares that they shall die who do not believe on him.

There are no recorded words of Jesus, no words written in the Bible, which seem to me more dreadful than these—" *Ye shall die in your sins.*"

There are, indeed, views of that to which sin exposes us in the future which are more particular, more specific, set forth in more graphic representation; but to my mind the very generality of this, the absence from it of all specification, and all particular description, give it a peculiar fearfulness. It seems to me that I should not shudder so much at the thought of the future retributions, if they were or could be fully described in human language, or brought within the measure of human comprehension. I am not so much afraid of anything which I find that I can measure, can go all round, and know that I have seen the whole of it. Anything which I could adequately describe to another, or which another could adequately describe to me, so that I should at length feel sure that I had the whole of it, had satisfactorily made out its full import—any such thing I might perhaps think it possible for me to bear when it should come upon me. But these

words of Jesus, "Ye shall die in your sins," give me the impression of something which he would not undertake to describe, something which cannot be adequately described or expressed, something which I cannot suppose myself able adequately to conceive.

Standing here, in this world, in the midst of what is so evidently a scene of probation and of mercy, of opportunity and of hope; seeing myself, feeling myself so rapidly borne on across this scene, irresistibly borne toward the door of departure from it, unable to see an inch beyond that door into the solemn boundlessness—I listen for any voice that may peradventure come in to me, telling me what I must there meet, what I ought there to be prepared for. Thus listening, there come to me, out of God's Word, such divine voices as these: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. xxii. 11, 12). So clearly, so solemnly is that other world announced to me by God's Word, not as a scene of *probation*, of opportunity, of hope; but as a scene of

retribution, of judgment. It is not a place for earning wages, but for receiving wages; and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). It is not a scene of seed-sowing, but of harvest-gathering. "Oh, what shall the harvest be?"

Conscious of having here deeply sinned, conscious of being deeply sinful, I cannot think of anything else so dreadful as to be left to "die in my sins"—to go, in all my guilt, unpardoned, uncleansed, into the presence of Him who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity" (Hab. i. 13); to stand, in his presence, in that clear light in which there is no need of sun nor of candle, and in which "I shall know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12; Rev. xxii. 5).

Reading the Bible, and finding how full it is of God's revealed provision for our deliverance from sin; how affectionately it entreats us to depart from evil, and to seek life now; how richly it exhibits God's saving mercy and his gracious help;—then, to think of all these opportunities being neglected, all these provisions slighted, and that, notwithstanding them all, any should "die in their sins"—I cannot think of anything consoling or hopeful for them. For those who here know the way of life, and decline all invitations to walk in it; who know of Christ in all his

fulness of grace and truth, and turn their backs to him ; who refuse when he calls, and when he stretches out his hand do not regard it ; who, when he stands at the door and knocks, will not open to him and let him in ; who refuse to believe on him, and die in their sins ;—verily, “ there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment ” (Prov. i. 24–33 ; Heb. x. 26, 27 ; Rev. iii. 20).

PART II.—SALVATION.

INTRODUCTORY.



WE have studied Sin in several of the aspects in which the Bible reveals it, and in which we know it in sad experience ;—sin as an act ; as a state ; as disease ; as departure from God ; as an inheritance ; as a delusion ; as a doom. This has been necessarily a painful study ; it would be a useless one if there were no available remedy for the dreadful evil. In that case, the only true wisdom would be to close our eyes to the ruin before us, and harden our hearts against the misery upon us. It was because we knew that it is not so, that we were able to pursue that study. All the pain of it was made tolerable by the hope which accompanied it. Deep, dark, dismal as the valley of our sin and misery is, there is a light streaming into the darkness. “The

sable cloud turns forth a silver lining on the night." "The day-spring from on high hath visited us." Let us heed and follow its gleaming. Let us "take heed unto the light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in our hearts." Yea, let us believe that this shining light shall "shine more and more unto the perfect day." It surely will, if we obediently and trustingly "walk in the light," "as God gives us to see" it; light of truth, light of hope, light of salvation. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. *Moreover* whom he did predestinate, them he also

called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. viii. 24-30).

Verily, it is a "great salvation," which "the word of God written" reveals to us, which the Word of God incarnate brought to us. To the study of this Salvation we now turn, and will consider it in a number of aspects more or less correspondent to those in which we have studied sin.

As the very idea of sin implies a Sinner; an intelligent, free being, subject to a law, and responsible to a Law-giver; a being capable of doing the wrong acts, and being in the wrong state, which sin is; liable to the disorder, the alienation from God, the delusion, and the doom;—even so the idea of salvation implies a Saviour; a being who is able to do all that is implied in the rescue of the sinner from that doom, from that delusion, that disorder, that alienation, that evil state.

The first Bible reference to salvation, the first hint of deliverance from the ruin into which mankind, in the first pair, had then recently fallen, was in the obscure promise of one to come, "seed of the woman," who should defeat and destroy their destroyer, should "bruise the serpent's head."

When the ages and dispensations had been fulfilled

whereby preparation had been made, and the fulness of times completed, for his coming, the first New Testament reference to human salvation was in the angelic announcement of the name by which the coming Deliverer should be known: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21).

The wonderful person and the twofold nature of this Jesus, child of a human virgin, Son of the blessed God, we are not now to study. Knowledge of him sufficient for our purpose is here assumed, and the recognition of him as the personal author of the salvation which we are to study is taken for granted.

The salvation of which he is the author—who for that very reason was named JESUS, or SAVIOUR—was declared to be a salvation from SIN: "He shall save his people *from their sins*."

This salvation we are to contemplate in several aspects, in the light which the Bible throws upon it.

CHAPTER I.

SALVATION AS AN ACT.



WE have seen that salvation implies a Saviour. It also implies something evil from which one is saved. A person needing to be saved ; an evil from which he needs to be saved ; a person able to save ;—all these are continually implied.

There may be an actual exposure to the most serious danger ; and there may be a sudden transition from that situation of exposure to one of perfect safety by a single act. That may be wholly the act of the person himself ; it may be wholly the act of another ; it may be a concurrent act of the person saved with that of another, who, in either of these two latter cases, is properly called his saviour.

When Simon Peter, from his fishing-boat tossed helplessly on the waves of stormy Gennesaret, saw his Lord walking on the water, he asked permission to come to him ; but as he was coming his courage

and faith failed. He felt himself sinking. "Lord, save me," he cried; and immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" It was the peril of a moment. A single act of Jesus wrought a rescue, a salvation. Again, on the same waters, the disciples were imperilled by a fierce tempest covering and filling their vessel with waves. The Master was asleep. They awoke him with the wild cry, "Carest thou not that we perish?" "Peace, be still," said the Lord. "And there was a great calm." They were *saved* by the Lord's act, a single and sudden putting forth of his miraculous power, a single peremptory, decisive exercise of his dominion over the forces of nature. "He spake, and it was done." "He uttered his voice," and the mad elements subsided from their fury. "The winds heard it, and fled to their secret chambers; and the waters ceased their commotion, and rolled in gentle ripples upon the shore of Galilee." The imperilled crew of that Galilean vessel were saved by a single act of their Master. By the word of his power going forth in one mighty command their salvation was immediately and fully accomplished.

On one occasion, our Lord, being at the table of a *Pharisee*, was approached (as was practicable in their

Oriental mode of reclining) by a broken-hearted woman, who poured precious ointment from a costly vial upon his feet; and also shed tears on them so profusely, while she kissed them and let her loose hair fall about them, that the sacred writer poetically calls it washing his feet with her tears, and wiping them with her hair. The self-righteous host was astonished at this, and drew an inference unfavourable to Jesus' claim to be considered a prophet. This gave the Lord occasion to utter a most instructive parable, and most encouraging to the sincerely penitent. But the priceless gem that is set in the golden story is his word to the woman: "Thy faith hath *saved* thee; *enter into peace*."* There was wrought for this penitent an instant *salvation*, by the Lord's authoritative *act* of forgiveness. He also brought into great prominence her own act of faith, declaring that that had *saved* her. He justifies us in holding that there is a sudden, a momentary transition of a soul, when it receives divine forgiveness, which is properly called salvation. It is a transition, a passing over from a state of peril to a state of safety; from a condition of condemnation to a state of justifica-

* Luke vii. 50. This is a more exact rendering than that in our common version. It marks the *transition* of the forgiven soul, from its previous trouble and unrest, *into* that peace which passeth understanding.

tion; from a situation of exposure to wrath and ruin, to a situation of peace and of assurance of hope. He teaches us to say, that a soul which, by confessing its sin, and receiving divine forgiveness, has made that transition, is then and thereby saved; that a forgiven soul is a saved soul. Furthermore, he teaches us not only that this sudden and immediate salvation is accomplished by the authoritative act of God, but also that it is conditioned on an act of the sinful soul itself, even its act of faith, its believing acceptance of the Saviour, as he is offered in the gospel. So, most evidently, that penitent woman had accepted him, and poured the evidence of such acceptance on his feet, and sealed it with pure and fervent kisses, and filled all the space around with the holy fragrance. How could he have declared more distinctly the true and indispensable relation of her faith to her salvation, or how could he have emphasized the declaration more impressively, than by saying, as he did to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee; enter into peace"?

He teaches us the same lesson in his gracious healing of the woman who crept so timidly to him through the crowd, and touched the hem of his garment, for the healing of her painful and irksome *malady*: "And he said unto her, Daughter, be of

good comfort: thy faith hath *saved** thee: enter into peace" (Luke viii. 48). Another illustration of this is given us by Luke (xvii. 19), where he uses the same expression to a leper; and still another (xviii. 42), where, to the blind man of Jericho, responding to his touching prayer, "Lord, that I might receive my sight," he says, "Receive thy sight; thy faith hath *saved* thee." The faith, in that case, was shown simply by calling upon "Jesus, the son of David," with earnest and persistent outcry;—earnest, disregarding all small questions of decorum; persistent, in spite of all rebukes from those whose frigid propriety bade him hold his peace. Happy result and reward of persistent earnestness!

How like the sinner's salvation, and entering into peace, is this man's salvation from the misery of blindness! Luke, who records that gracious miracle, gives us (in Acts ii. 21) this sweeping, this glorious evangelical announcement: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall *call on the name* of the Lord shall be *saved*." He gives it from Peter, whose Pentecost sermon he is there reporting; and Peter

* Our version gives us "*made whole*" instead of "*saved*," but in the Greek the word is the same which is rendered "*saved*" in the other passages. The words "*made whole*" correctly explain what kind of *salvation* was intended; saved from the burden and pain of that "*issue of blood*."

avowedly quotes it from the prophet Joel. Turning back to that book of prophecy, in the last verse of its second chapter, you will read: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be *delivered*." An inspired apostle interprets for us an inspired prophecy, and assures us that the transition is made, from the wretchedness and exposure of sin into the blessedness of assured salvation, by that believing acceptance of the Lord which is naturally and properly signified by "*calling on his name*." The natural connection between the mind and the mouth, between the thoughts of the heart and the utterances of the tongue, is constantly taken for granted in Scripture. It is assumed that whoever heartily trusts in the Lord will orally call upon his name. It is taken for granted that if the heart is filled with grateful confidence in his mercy, the mouth will "shew forth his praise." It is affirmed, that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10). Says Dr. M'Cosh: "There may be prayer where there are no words employed, and the heart may move when the lips do not move. Still, it is according to the constitution of man that out of the abundance of the heart *the mouth* will speak; and words, while forming no

essential part of the prayer, will essentially aid it, by keeping the mind from falling into blankness and vacuity, by instigating and guiding it in a certain train; in short, they furnish cords to bind the sacrifice to the altar, they supply a censer in which the delicate incense of our feelings may be presented before the Lord." *

That Christian philosopher thus partly explains the utility of spoken words in the offering of prayer, and in cultivating the spirit and the habit of prayer. Their value in that first act of prayer, wherein a soul commits itself to God, is signally exemplified in a narrative given by the late Mr. Finney in his "Memoirs." It is the account of the conversion of Mr. H—— of Buffalo, in 1831. I transcribe from pp. 308–310 of the volume:—

"That night he could not sleep. His mind was so exercised that he rose as soon as there was any light, left his house and went off to a considerable distance, where there was then a grove, near a place where he had some water-works, which he called 'the Hydraulics.' There in the grove he knelt down to pray. He said he had felt during the night as if he must get away by himself, so that he could *speak aloud and let out his voice and his heart*, as he was pressed

* "Divine Government, Physical and Moral," p. 220.

beyond endurance with the sense of his sins, and with the necessity of immediately making his peace with God. But to his surprise and mortification, when he knelt down and attempted to pray, he found that his heart would not pray. He had no words; he had no desires that he could express in words. He said that it appeared to him that his heart was as hard as marble, and that he had not the least feeling on the subject. He stood upon his knees disappointed and confounded, and found that if he opened his mouth to pray, he had nothing in the form of prayer that he could sincerely utter.

“In this state it occurred to him that he could say the Lord’s Prayer. So he began, ‘Our Father which art in heaven.’ He said, *as soon as he uttered the words* he was convicted of his hypocrisy in calling God his Father. When he added the petition, ‘Hallowed be thy name,’ he said it almost shocked him. He saw that he was not sincere, that his words did not at all express the state of his mind. He did not care to have God’s name hallowed. Then he uttered the next petition, ‘Thy kingdom come.’ Upon this he said he almost choked. He saw that he did not want the kingdom of God to come; that it was hypocritical in him to say so, and that he could not say it *as really* expressing the sincere desire of his heart.

And then came the petition, 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.' He said his heart rose up against that, and he could not say it. Here he was brought face to face with the will of God. He had been told from day to day that he was opposed to this will; that he was not willing to accept it; that it was his voluntary opposition to God, to his law, and his will that was the obstacle in the way of his conversion. This consideration he had resisted and fought with desperation. But here on his knees, with the Lord's Prayer in his mouth, he was brought face to face with that question: and he saw with perfect clearness that what he had been told was true; that he was not willing that God's will should be done; and that he did not do it himself, because he would not.

"Here, the whole question of his rebellion, in its nature and its extent, was brought so strongly before him, that he saw it would cost him a mighty struggle to give up that voluntary opposition to God. And then, he said, he gathered up all the strength of his will and *cried aloud*, 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.' He said he was perfectly conscious that his will went with his words; that he accepted the will of God, and the whole will of God; that he made a full surrender to God, and accepted

Christ just as he is offered in the gospel. He gave up his sins, and embraced the will of God as his universal rule of life. The language of his heart was, 'Lord, do with me as seemeth thee good.' 'Let thy will be done with me, and with all creatures on earth, as it is done in heaven.' He said he prayed freely as soon as his will surrendered; and his heart poured itself out like a flood. His rebellion all passed away, his feelings subsided into a great calm, and a sweet peace seemed to fill his soul."

Not more suddenly did turbulent Gennesaret settle into level tranquillity, and the roar of that angry tempest cease in the surrounding hills, when the voice of Jesus sent out, "amid the howling of the tempest," its potent "*Peace, be still.*" It was a sudden, an instantaneous stepping over from the territory of rebellion into the territory of submission. It was an instantaneous transition from the tumult of hostility to God into the quiet of reconciliation. It was a sudden, instantaneous abandonment of self and acceptance of Christ. It was an immediate, voluntary, trustful coming into union with Christ, in cordial, affectionate, obedient confidence. It was a single, voluntary, decisive act of the soul, committing itself to him, attaching itself to him, connecting itself with him. It was as distinct an action, as voluntary,

as decisive, as instantaneous, as your grasping the plank pushed out to you by friendly hands over the edge of the ice, where you had broken through; and it wrought as immediate and as complete a rescue. There was, there *is* salvation, in that first honest, hearty act of trust, of full self-commitment to the gracious, almighty Saviour.

CHAPTER II.

DIVERSE BEGINNINGS OF SALVATION.



THE decisive act of the beginning of salvation, recorded at the close of the preceding chapter, was the conscious bowing of a human will to the will of God. It was a mature will, a strong will, an obstinate will, a proud will. It was a will which, in its steadiness, and tenacity, and strength, was the very back-bone of a powerful character, of a sturdy and energetic manhood. It was such a will as makes its possessor a power in the community in which he lives, a significant factor in the problems of the age to which he belongs, and is felt effectively and memorably in the enterprises and in the history of his time. Such a will, having matured and consolidated in impenitence, in selfness, when "brought face to face with the will of God," must yield and bow, as, happily, that will did; or else, stiffening itself in obstinate

refusal, it must choose the attitude of rebellion, and abide the result—the eternal consequence. Such a will was that of him who so suddenly found himself face to face with the Lord Jesus near Damascus, and there yielding to him, in full surrender, began that memorable apostolic career. Such a will was that of him in Egypt who found himself face to face with Moses, the messenger of Jehovah to him, and who, hardening his heart in rebellious obstinacy, said, “Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go” (Ex. v. 2). In every age, among every people to whom Jehovah has made himself known, and sent his word, there are examples of such decisive surrender, and of such determined refusal;—examples also, far more numerous, of as real refusal, less courageously made, disguising itself in some such cowardly evasion as that of Felix, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts xxiv. 25). The result will be the same to you, whether you politely bow the Lord away from your door with smooth and graceful apology, or rudely bid him begone.

But that is not the only form of the initial act in the experience of salvation. This initial act is frequently called *conversion*. The word fitly describes

such a change, such a turning, such a reversal of position. The experience which Mr. Finney so graphically describes was doubtless regarded by him, and rightly regarded, as a clear instance of conversion, a memorable and instructive instance. There were many such instances in his time and under his preaching. It was a type of conversion to which conversion under his preaching was very apt to conform, to which his preaching was fitted to lead, whenever the accompanying energy of the Holy Spirit made it effectual; for that preaching necessarily took its character from the qualities of his own mind, and the type of his own experience, himself a man of uncommon strength of character, converted in maturity of manhood, and from positive and mature ungodliness.

There are many mature men now needing such conversion as much as those men needed it in the preceding generation. One can hardly help wishing that there might come among us, in this age, such another Elijah the prophet, a man of such decisive individuality, and with a will having such power over other wills. It would be a fatal mistake for such men to wait for any such human leader. It is hardly more probable that this age will have a *Finney* than that it will have an Elijah. The ques-

tion whether the mature impenitent men of to-day, —the men now managing railroads, and telegraphs, and manufactories, and commercial enterprises, enacting and expounding laws, and administering governments,—will submit themselves to God, and commit themselves to Christ, is a question which they will probably have to settle in the clear, dry light of scriptural knowledge, in which they have grown up from childhood, and which they possess in a way favourable to calm deliberation and candid decision, but not likely to electrify them with sudden and overwhelming conviction. To all such we say calmly, yet earnestly, It must just be left between you and God, for you yourselves to *choose* whether you will serve him. It must just be left between you and Christ, for yourselves to *decide*, whether, like the fishermen, John and Simon Peter, and the custom-house officer, Matthew, you will arise and follow him; or whether, like the young man in whom he was so kindly interested, but who lacked one thing—namely, the willingness to consecrate his property to him—you will “go away sorrowful,” and remain unsaved (Luke xviii. 18–24).

I have spoken of that instance of conversion which Mr. Finney relates, as illustrating a type of conver-

sion. So speaking, I have intimated that there are different types of conversion; that while in all genuine conversions the *change* which the word expresses is radical and decisive, it is, in different instances, attended by a considerable variety of conscious and manifested experiences.

This variety in types of conversion is sufficiently illustrated in the New Testament, in the instances of conversion recorded by the inspired writers, and which occurred in the time of the apostles.

1. *That of Saul of Tarsus* (Acts ix.).—This was of the same type with that of Mr. H—— of Buffalo. It is a mature mind in conscious opposition to Christ, suddenly giving up that opposition, and taking the attitude of voluntary subjection to him. This is almost certain to be preceded by violent emotion fitly symbolized by a tempest, and followed by a tranquillity as fitly represented by the subsidence of such a storm at the miracle-doing word of Jesus. The prominent feature in this type of conversion is submission, surrender of the human will to the will of God, to which it has been in conscious rebellious opposition, and the rightful supremacy of which is clearly seen. It is the giving up of a determination known and felt to be wrong, and voluntary subjection to an authority seen *and known* to be right. It is not a breaking down

of the will. The energy and persistence of the man, that which we significantly call his will-power, may subsequently be found undiminished, and may carry him on in a career which shall be historic and memorable. There have been no stronger human wills than those which have been most decisive in their surrender, and most persistent in their submission to the will of God. As illustrations of this, I will only name Paul in the first century, and Mr. Finney himself in this passing century. This type of conversion does not crush the will, does not enfeeble it. It simply regulates it, by reducing it into due subordination to the will of God. Let it not be supposed that this surrender of the will is all that is involved in such a conversion. Other things, no doubt, are involved, of which I shall speak more particularly as connected with other types of conversion, and being severally prominent in them and characteristic of them, while this type is characterized by this one, its most prominent feature. In such a conversion as Saul's, or that of Mr. H—— in Buffalo, there is nothing else of which the soul must be so vividly conscious at the time, nor anything else so memorable to it ever afterward, as that surrender of the will. Submission to the authority and the will of God is such a soul's conversion.

2. *That of the Jailer* (Acts xvi.).—This man was

not probably very well acquainted with the gospel. We have no evidence that he was an unusually bad man;—about such a man as we should expect to find a Roman officer in charge of a prison in a Roman province; stern, harsh, not tenderly considerate of prisoners whom he had been strictly charged to keep securely; a worldly, selfish man, we may well believe him to have been. Yet he seems not to have been without conscience; and his conscience was not so profoundly asleep but that it awoke easily, and cried loudly to him, when the earthquake shook open the prison doors. He recognized in this a divine interposition, an interposition of the God of those strange prisoners. Conscious of guilt, and fearing the wrath of God, and quite sure that those prisoners could teach him the way of mercy, if there was a way of mercy for him, he came trembling to them and cried out, “What must I do to be saved?” It was honest terror; nor was it unmanly terror. It is not cowardice to fear God. It is not courage, but foolhardiness, not to be afraid of his judgments. This jailer knew himself to be a sinner, and when the God who had laid the foundations of the earth, and could shake them, seemed about to reveal himself in judgment, he trembled with fear. He desired, if possible, to *be saved from the coming wrath*. He soon learned

from his prisoners that their Master was the Saviour of men from their sins, and from the wrath of God, which those sins deserve. He readily accepted this offer of salvation; took the Lord Jesus to be his Lord and his Saviour; immediately had the visible seal of this acceptance put upon him, and was numbered thenceforth among his disciples.

Here is not a conflict of wills, a human will first stiffening itself in resolute resistance to the will of God, and at length bowing in submission. Doubtless the surrender of his will to the authority and will of God is involved; but this is not the prominent and characteristic feature in this case, as it was in the other. Neither does there appear to have been any violent struggle before he was brought to this surrender. The prominent feature here is the believing acceptance of offered salvation from a fearful exposure to God's just anger. The season of distress preceding the full relief of that glad acceptance was short, simply because the acceptance came so soon—as soon, apparently, as the offer and the opportunity were clearly seen and understood.

“ Oh, what peace men often forfeit !
Oh, what needless pain they bear ! ”

What weary and tedious months of gloom and despondency *would* be saved, if as soon as Christ's gra-

cious offer is brought to them they would at once heartily and trustingly accept it! So did that Philippian jailer; and the clear statement of his case by Luke gives us that type of conversion,—a sinner made sensible of his just exposure to divine wrath, and promptly accepting Christ's merciful offer of deliverance from that exposure. One thus converted naturally at once avows his discipleship, associates himself with fellow-disciples, takes the badge of discipleship upon him, and thenceforth follows the Lord in dutiful and thankful service, even as blind Bartimeus, as soon as his blindness was cured, thankfully "followed Jesus in the way" (Mark x. 52).

3. *That of the Ethiopian* (Acts viii.).—This man was found by the evangelist Philip, reading in his chariot, from the book of the prophecies of Isaiah, that wonderful passage concerning the Christ being led as a lamb to the slaughter; and so little instructed was he that he did not even know of whom the prophet so spoke, whether "of himself or of some other man." Philip was fresh from Jerusalem; he was furnished with full information of the facts which had then recently fulfilled that precious prophecy; he was sent to the candid inquirer by the Holy Spirit, and by him doubtless aided in instructing him. He soon made him aware that Jesus, slain

and risen again, was the Lamb of God on whom all our sins had been laid, and "by whose stripes we are healed." As soon as he sees this, he accepts it; as soon as they come to a convenient place, he avows his belief in Jesus the Christ, and seals the avowal by baptism; and he "goes on his way rejoicing." There is no account here of any struggle of will against God's will, making the final surrender a marked and notable feature of the experience. There is no account of any experience of terror in view of exposure to God's just wrath, prompting the earnest outcry, "What must I do to be saved?" There is clearly enough implied the confession of guilt, and we may fairly presume that this was accompanied with the candid acknowledgment of just exposure to the penalty of sin. But so far as appears, the whole mind was tranquil, thoughtful, teachable, and pre-eminently candid. The prominent feature in this case is the prompt and glad acceptance of Christ, the Saviour, just as soon as the soul knows him, and knows itself privileged to accept him. And let us not fail to observe that it is clearly and pre-eminently as our substitute, suffering vicariously for us, that Jesus was presented to the Ethiopian by Philip and by the Holy Spirit; and that in that character the Ethiopian *accepted* him, and "went on his way re-

joicing," a relieved, saved, happy man; the most glad-some man, we may well believe, though the most conscientious man, thenceforth, of all Candace's courtiers, and of all her subjects.

Can any observant person fail to see that this is the prevalent type of conversion under the preaching of the favoured evangelist of our time, who on a conspicuous and memorable occasion, announced that 53rd chapter of Isaiah as his printed creed? The rationalism of our time loftily criticises this evangelist's continual presentation of "*the blood*," yet is compelled to confess the efficacy of his preaching in winning and saving men from vicious and unclean lives, as no bloodless teaching and extolling of Jesus' precepts and example has shown itself able to win and to save. Doubtless Mr. Moody knows that in "the blood" is the very "hiding of the power" of that gospel which he so diligently and so successfully preaches. His whole labour is to convince men that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin," and to persuade them to accept its cleansing from theirs. The more speedily they thus accept it, with the less of delay, of struggling, of endurance, of distress, and fear, and doubt, and despondency, the better.

Another example of this type of conversion seems

to me to be given in the same chapter. It is the case of Lydia. She was evidently a respectable, virtuous, serious woman. She is even spoken of as one who "worshipped God." This may even justify a doubt whether, when she sat there by the river-side, with other women who resorted to that place of prayer, she needed conversion. We need not try to solve that doubt. She at least did not know Jesus as the Christ. The presumption is that she did not know God's way of peace, though she revered God and desired to find access to him. But she was attentive; she was candid; she was teachable. The Lord made her so. "The Lord opened her heart, that she *attended* unto the things that were spoken of Paul." The result was the natural and proper result of candid attention to any serious communication. She acted according to its import. She accepted it, and at once put her life under its directing influence. So far as appears, there was as little of tumult in her mind about it, as little of agitation or struggle, and just as quiet, and straightforward, and decisive proceeding, as in accepting an offer for a quantity of the purple which she used to sell; just as little as there might have been in the mind of so sensible a woman in accepting a proposal of marriage from a man whom she had long known and thor-


oughly esteemed, when frankly informed by him of his love and his desire to make her his wife. Believing, affectionate, sincere acceptance is the essential thing in the true union of two souls in marriage. Believing, affectionate, sincere acceptance is the essential thing in the union of a soul with Christ. In each case, it is the acceptance of a person, in view of what he is known to be, justifying the full trust in him for all for which he offers himself.

This quiet, thoughtful type of conversion is unquestionably as genuine and scriptural as any of those of which the phenomena are more striking and startling. I believe it to be the type in which conversion is more apt to occur among people long acquainted with the Bible, and accustomed reverently to attend upon public worship and preaching. I seriously fear that some, needing conversion, feeling their need of it, and having now the opportunity for it, are prevented from experiencing it by failing to see that the Scriptures do offer them this type of conversion. They are waiting for some conscious struggle with God, giving them opportunity to surrender to him; or for a conscious terror in view of their known exposure, which long use has made them able to think of without tremor. They have been scripturally taught, and they believe, that they must be moved and led

by the Spirit of God to any true acceptance of the Saviour; but they fail to see (perhaps because they have not herein been scripturally taught) that the calm thoughtfulness of which they are conscious, and the clear perception which they have of their need and of Christ's sufficiency, are truly the work of God's Spirit within them. Dear reader, in simply yielding to this gentle influence, in voluntarily going the way it leads, you would be led by the Spirit of God; and "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14).

CHAPTER III.

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL TO THE BEGINNING OF SALVATION.

E have seen that the beginning of salvation, in the experience of any human soul, may have considerable variety of conscious and manifested phenomena. We have found several distinct types of conversion in the narratives given in the Acts of the Apostles; and we have found these different types exemplified in our own age. We have seen mature persons making the transition from ungodliness to piety, which the word "conversion" properly expresses, by a sudden and conscious submission of the will to God, after a season of stiff and resolute opposition, or of violent and bitter conflict. Others we have seen terrified by a serious and just apprehension of exposure to the righteous anger of God, and to utter and hopeless destruction, learning that Christ Jesus offers them salvation from that

exposure, and finding speedy relief in cordial acceptance of that gracious offer. We have seen still others made aware of their guilt and exposure, and of the opportunity to be saved from both by the Lord Jesus, at once quietly and calmly but decisively embracing the opportunity, and "going on their way rejoicing." In either case, the acceptance of Christ, being sincere and real, will be evidenced by the abandonment of whatever the person believes to be displeasing to Christ, and by the honest endeavour to follow him in the way of hearty obedience. In all these cases, no doubt, the same elements of faith and repentance are involved; but in one class of cases one feature of the experience is prominent and characteristic, and another in another.

These varieties of type in conversion are probably occasioned by differences of temperament, of mental development and culture, of age, of habits, and of the circumstances in which the conversion occurs. It is not important, nor is it best, for those needing conversion to concern themselves about these different types of it any further than this. They need to know that there are different types, and therefore they need not be hindered or discouraged in seeking salvation, because they do not find their own minds affected as they know that some other mind has

been with which they have been acquainted, or of which they have read, in religious biography or in the Bible. It is important to see what is essential and common to all types of genuine conversion, and not to be diverted from attention to this by having the mind occupied with what is variable and unessential. The decisive thing, in every case, is the *acceptance of JESUS CHRIST* as he is offered in the gospel. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John i. 12). "Therefore if any man *be in Christ*, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. v. 17).

This beginning act of salvation, the soul's acceptance of Christ, may properly be still held before us for further study. We cannot study it too thoroughly. We cannot contemplate it too often nor too earnestly. Let us consider what it involves.

1. The soul must be informed of the truth, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of men from sin. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom. x. 14.)

All our work, as ministers, as Sabbath-school teachers, as parents, or in any way, for the salvation of men or of children, begins with giving them information, communicating truth to them, making truth

known to them, and helping them to understand it. So it was in the preaching of the apostles, and in all evangelizing in their time, and always since. When Philip, by direction of the Holy Spirit, "went near and joined himself to that chariot," in which the Ethiopian eunuch was riding (Acts viii. 29), it was for the purpose of helping him to understand what he was reading. Philip's plain exposition of that scripture soon made it evident to that candid and teachable man that he whom the prophet there foretold (to be "led as a sheep to the slaughter") was Jesus of Galilee, lately slain in Jerusalem, and who had risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven. The mind of the inquirer had first to be furnished with this information, to be made the possessor of this truth. So also must Lydia first "attend unto the things which were spoken by Paul" (Acts xvi. 14). Attention is the voluntary act of a hearer, whereby his mind takes the truth which a speaker delivers, and without which the speaking will be mere sound, empty and ineffective. The two actions, truthful speaking and attentive hearing, must concur in order that the hearer's soul may really have possession of the truth by means of which it is to be saved.

2. The soul must sincerely accept the truth which is thus communicated to it. That word accept is a

great word. It is a deep word. We have no plummet which we can drop to the bottom of its meaning. "It means everything." And yet it is a very simple word. It is a very simple thing which it expresses. Do not miss the simplicity of its meaning: then you need not lose its depth.

You accept an offered bargain: so many yards of cloth, or so many acres of land, at so much an acre, or so much a yard. This means that your whole mind assents to the representation made to you concerning the value of the property and its desirableness to you as a possession, and that you will act accordingly. You will take possession of the property, and will honestly pay the stipulated price. You will do all that the transaction implies, all that the bargain means.

You accept an invitation to dine with a friend. This means not only that you are informed of his sending you an invitation, and acknowledge that the messenger has faithfully delivered it to you, but also that you agree to do that which it offers you the privilege of doing. Your friend may expect you to be at his table.

A gift is sent to you, in token of friendly regard. Your acceptance of it implies your grateful appreciation of that friendly regard, your willingness to be so

regarded. You and the giver are friends. Sincerity and self-respect would require you to refuse the gift, if you could not honestly assent to that which it signifies and seals.

You are in want ; have not wherewith to purchase bread or fuel or needed clothing. Food, fuel, clothing, or money to purchase them, is sent to you by a benevolent person. If you accept it, you not only take and use the material benefit, but take the position and relation of a beneficiary, and take upon you the indebtedness, the duty of gratitude. If your heart is right, it responds with actual conscious gratitude, which your mouth will express, and your conduct will manifest. Nothing short of this would be a true, a real acceptance.

You have done wrong, and he whom you have injured is ready to forgive you. Acceptance of his forgiveness is not a reality if you are still cherishing the wrong disposition, ready to repeat the injury.

You accept an offer of marriage. This means, not merely that you have received the offer ; not merely that you know of it as a fact, and believe it to be sincerely and honourably made ;—it means that you respond to all that it proposes ; give all that it asks ; consent to enter into the relation which it contemplates ; surrender yourself to the affectionate and

honourable possession which it means. That *acceptance* of a person, offering himself for such a permanent union, involves the giving yourself to him in the corresponding self-commitment, and binding yourself with him in the mutual obligation and the indissoluble union. That acceptance means everything, involves everything which the proposal means. No other acceptance, in human and earthly affairs, means so much, because no other proposal has so much in it. Acceptance of any proposal—honest and real acceptance—means everything that is in that proposal.

How much is there—let us now consider—in Christ's proposal? What is fairly meant when a soul accepts him?

1. It does not mean that the accepting soul fully understands him. Some souls are troubled and hindered by the fact, that as soon as they seriously think of Jesus, and begin earnestly to study what is written of him in the Word of God, they find that there is a great deal written which they cannot understand. The meek, kind man, "who went about doing good" in Galilee and Judea; always gentle, compassionate, considerate, helpful; always truthful, earnest, faithful; always patient, forbearing, forgiving;—all this *seems not* difficult to understand. Even his miracles—

healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, walking on the sea, raising the dead—are not difficult to understand, from the common-sense point of view which Nicodemus took (John iii. 2). He is “a teacher come from God,” and “God is with him,” sealing him as his messenger. The power of God is present in this man to do all these wonders. This is plain enough. The unlettered peasant can understand it as well as the learned scholar. The little child can understand it as well as the wise man. But when we find this Jesus not only speaking for God, like Isaiah and Elijah and Moses; and doing miracles to show that he has authority to speak for God, and that God is with him while he speaks; but also find him claiming to have come into this world, not as other men do, coming then into being, but down from a higher world and glorious state, in which he was “in the beginning,” and is eternally; when we find the scripture asserting that he “was in the beginning with God, and was God; that he and the divine Father are one, so that whoever hath seen him hath seen the Father”—surely here we find something which we cannot understand. This man Jesus, real and true man as he evidently is, is also as evidently something besides, something higher, something grander. We see in him all that belongs to our human nature,

except its sin; but we also see a higher nature, and are constrained even to adore him as God. Yet he himself forbids us, and all his apostles, taught and commissioned by him, forbid us to believe in more Gods than one. Then God, the true and only God, Jehovah, the Eternal, is here "manifested in flesh," the great "mystery of godliness." We cannot understand this. It "passeth knowledge."

Equally unable may we be to understand his work. How he, in his innocence, can take our sins upon him; how he, the just, the holy, can righteously suffer for us, the unjust, the sinful; how the pain and the shame which he willingly bore can rightly be substituted for the shame and woe which we for our sins deserved—this also we may be unable to understand. Some may think that they understand it. Let us not dispute with them; but no more let us be alarmed or disheartened if they fail to make us understand it, with all their explanations. It is not necessary. God understands it. When he makes us a plain offer, we may be sure that he understands what he is doing. When he assures us that Christ's sacrifice does expiate human guilt—does remove the necessity of punishing us for the vindication of his justice, does render it possible for him to "be just and the justifier of every one who believeth" (Rom. iii. 26)—cannot we take all

that to be true, on God's word for it, simply because he says it, however unable we may be to understand how it all can be, or however unsatisfactory may be all the attempts of theologians to explain it, to make us understand it?

2. That is just what we have to do:—to take all that to be true, which God thus says to us; to take all that to be sincere, which God offers to us; to take all that to be reliable, which God proposes to us; to believe all that to have been fully accomplished, which Christ, his eternal Son, incarnate, undertook for us. We have just to believe this, to take it to be true, not because we can explain it, nor because any one can explain it to us, but just because God says it.

3. Such full and hearty belief of God's testimony and proposals concerning his Son, prepares the way for, and justifies the consent of, the will, which makes the act of acceptance complete.

This final, consummating act of acceptance, has been called "the faith of a transaction," and has been illustrated somewhat as follows: A man goes to his neighbour with a proposal that he shall invest a sum of money in a business enterprise. Let it be the construction of a railroad. The first thing he has to do is to give him the needed information, to furnish him

with the facts on which his decision must be based. He lays before him the survey of the tract of country through which the road is to pass; shows him the practicability of the route, and the reasonable expense of construction; gives him the statistics of trade between the points which the road is to connect, and the populousness of the towns and districts along the route; in short, furnishes him with all the information needed for forming an intelligent judgment. Let us suppose that all these facts are seen and admitted to be satisfactory. The man assents to the statements, and admits the validity of the argument founded on them. He says: "Yes, I see; I am convinced that this is a practicable enterprise, and that it is a wise investment." The only question that now remains is this, "Will you invest?" This is not a question for the intellect, but for the will. The intellect has done its work, and finished it. The facts are all seen, have all been examined, have all been weighed. The figuring is all done. The estimates are all made. The thinking is finished. Any more thinking is not only superfluous, but bewildering or debilitating. The only thing now to be done is to decide: "Will you invest?" The question no longer is, "What do you think?"—that is answered. The question now is, "What will you do?" That is the only question.

This is the question to prepare for which all the previous investigation was made. Before the investigation this question would have been premature. Except as a preparation for this, the investigation would have been useless. In the answer to this question the will is concerned. This is a decision of the mind, a decision of the man, whether he will commit the interest in question to the view of truth which has won the consent of his understanding. If he says, "I will do it"—if he takes his pen, and subscribes the instrument—if he draws his check, and delivers it, accepting the receipt or the certificate or the bond in return—then he has exercised "the faith of a transaction." The faith is now consistent and complete. The whole man is in it.


The same thing is true when you are proposing to yourself a voyage across the sea. You obtain all needed information concerning a particular ocean steamer—information concerning her sea-worthiness, the competency of her commander, the fidelity of her crew, etc. All these being satisfactory, you come to the conclusion that it would be safe and wise to embark. All this amounts to nothing unless you decide that you will embark. Then your will enters into your belief, and quickens it into "the faith of a transaction."

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If by similar investigation and consideration of facts you conclude that a serious surgical operation is necessary, and that the surgeon whom you have consulted is competent and faithful, your faith in that surgeon becomes complete and effective as "the faith of a transaction," when you stretch yourself out on the couch and take the chloroform. Thus you not merely declare your belief in the skill and fidelity of the surgeon, but you actually commit yourself to him. Human life abounds with transactions which are thus the simple consummation of faith. The Christian life begins with such a transaction. A soul made acquainted with the Lord Jesus, furnished from holy Scripture with all requisite information concerning him, convinced that he is the all-sufficient and the only Saviour from sin, then just *takes* him as such—takes him as he offers himself, and thenceforth relies upon him.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY BEGINNING OF SALVATION.

HE Scriptures have not left us without examples of personal spiritual salvation beginning in very early life. There are many reasons for regarding such early beginning as both entirely practicable and altogether desirable. Two notable instances of this are that of Samuel in the Old Testament, and that of Timothy in the New Testament. We also have precious and memorable words of our Lord, assuring all children that they may come to him, and belong to his kingdom; and encouraging all who have the care of children, and who love them, to bring them to him. Nay, it is worthy of being carefully noted that he charges us all *not to hinder* little children from coming to him. He saw that we would be in danger of this; that even religious teachers and pastors would be apt positively to prevent children from coming or being

brought to him. Certainly none of us intend anything so cruel as that. But we are, any of us, liable not to understand the feelings and the needs of children. Even more liable are we not to understand, and so not to let the children understand, that the salvation of Christ is for them as well as for grown-up people; for them now, not by-and-by; for them especially, and that they can better and more easily take it now than at any time hereafter. Our Lord's treatment of little children, and his words concerning them, do fairly teach all this.

How early may salvation from sin begin in the experience of a child? How young may a child be a Christian? At how early an age can that change take place which is commonly and properly called conversion, and which is the passing of a soul out of the state of impenitence into that of true piety? We have seen that this change may be experienced under a considerable variety of forms or types, and we have tried to ascertain what is essential to it under all these forms. If we should find that some of these forms of conversion never occur in early childhood, it might still be that it should be possible for little children to experience it under other forms. It seems not unlikely that the difference between childhood *and maturity* should account in a large degree for the

difference between one type of conversion and another. By this I mean that it would seem natural to expect that one converted in early childhood should not have all the same feelings and exercises of mind with one converted in maturity. As a matter of fact, however, I believe there is as real diversity among the experiences of children as among those of men and women—as real, if not as great difference, between the conversion of one child and that of another as between the conversion of one man and that of another—for example, between the conversion of Saul of Tarsus and that of the Ethiopian eunuch. A child, as truly as a man, may find the decisive point of this experience in some conflict of his will with the will of God, in some way made known to him; and his actual submission, his consent to be controlled by the will of God, may be the beginning act of his salvation as decisively as it was with Mr. H—— in Buffalo, or with Saul near Damascus. The practical issue between God and the little child is not likely to be the same as between God and the mature man. With the mature man it does not always come in the form in which Mr. H—— met it, in the general and comprehensive question, “Can I sincerely say, ‘Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven’?” Sometimes it comes as a more specific question—“Will I do this

particular thing which God requires of me, and because he requires it?" Or, "Will I abandon this particular indulgence, or practice, or interest, simply because I am convinced that it is God's will that I should abandon it?" Just as Adam and Eve broke away from their happy state of willing subjection to the will of God, by making up their minds to disobey him in a particular case, to do a particular thing which he had forbidden, so a soul may return into the state of willing subjection to the will of God, in the act of obeying a particular command. Doubtless the first act of real and sincere obedience to God is the act of a renewed or converted soul, as certainly as the first act of disobedience was the act of a fallen soul. In the case of a child, there is a close connection between the authority of God and the authority of its parents. God deals with little children mainly through their parents. The duty of obedience to the father and the mother is probably the first duty of which most children become conscious. The command, "Honour thy father and thy mother," is not only "the first commandment with promise," but often, no doubt, the first commandment which a child knows as a commandment of God, and which he feels bound to obey. The direct struggle of the *little child's* will may most probably be with the will

of the parent. There may be a struggle between a parent and child which is full of selfish passion and obstinacy on both sides. The parent may be simply determined to subdue the child—to make the child's obstinacy yield to his own arbitrariness—the child's passion to his stronger passion—the child's selfish desire to be gratified or to have his own way, to the parent's equally selfish desire to be gratified or to have his own way. Here strength may overpower and crush down weakness with no more moral or spiritual effect than when a sturdy ram butts backward a too adventurous lamb. But when a thoughtful, loving, godly parent understands himself to be intrusted with the care and nurture and training of a child, by the God to whom both parent and child owe their being, and are accountable, any opposition of that child's will to the will of his parent is likely to be a very different affair. Such a parent is not engaged in a selfish struggle with a fellow-being smaller and feebler than himself, determined to have and hold the advantage which superior size and strength give him. There is nothing of his own pleasure which such a father would not willingly forego, there is nothing of her own comfort or enjoyment which such a mother would not gladly give up, for the real welfare of their child. But to give

up their control of the child, they know, would be hurtful to the child, dangerous, not improbably ruinous. Wise love forbids their doing or risking such fearful harm to the child. Furthermore, they know themselves to be invested, by God, with a sacred authority over the child, to which, by them, he has given immortal being. This authority is a sacred trust from him, which fidelity to him requires them to keep; forbids them to surrender. When such parents find their child disobedient to them, they know that he is at the same time, and in that very thing, disobedient to God also; and it is obedience to God which they are commissioned to require—subjection to the authority of God reaching the child through them. There is, there can be, no more solemn issue made up between any two beings than this—"Will you, a child, in the home of your parents, obediently submit to those parents in their exercise of the authority which God has given them?" They dare not yield to you, because that would be disobedience to God; your yielding to them is obedience to God. When a child sees this, and does thus honestly and truly yield his will to the authority of his parents, because he sees that their authority is God's authority, and in submitting to them he *submits to God*—that may be the child's conversion, as

genuine and as thorough as that of the strong, proud, self-willed man, in the Buffalo grove, with no human authority between him and God, but facing God alone, and consciously giving up his opposition, pouring all his submissive soul out in the loud cry, "*Thy will be done.*"

Christian parents, in the thoughtful, faithful, loving, prayerful, firm exercise of parental authority, are not merely educating their child for this world, but are administering to that child the best adapted means of grace. In bringing your child to willing submission to you, you may, at the same time and on the same issue, be bringing him into willing submission to God. Remember that by no power of your own can you accomplish this. In praying God to bring your child, by the power of his Spirit, into that subjection to you which he has ordained, you are indeed asking him to convert that child, to make it his child. If your child is disobedient and unsubmitive to you, the worst of it is that this proves the child to be disobedient and unsubmitive to God. Your prayer ought to be, that God will grant his converting grace to the child, and that the child's true conversion to God may be evidenced by his filial submission to you. Praying thus, watching thereunto *with believing expectation, and thought-*

fully, watchfully, patiently using all scriptural means to that end, ought not you to accept the child's real and evident submission to your authority as a good evidence of his real conversion to God? I do not say that this is the only evidence, nor that this alone is sufficient evidence; but I cannot help regarding it as a good evidence, as even among the best of evidences, and without this I know of no other that is satisfactory.

Does some thoughtful parent ask: "How young may my child have this experience? Must there be a definite and a decisive conflict between me and my child, a struggle more or less vehement, and more or less protracted, of the child's will against my parental authority, ended by the child's submission? And must this be after the child is old enough to be taught, and to know that I am ruling him for and under God, and that his submission or resistance to me is submission or resistance to God?" I cannot think so. I think that there are facts within the observation of parents which show that this whole question of a child's dutiful subjection to its parents may be settled in the cradle, or in the arms of the parent, during that early period of which there is no remembrance in later life, so that the person will have no recollection of ever *having* been in opposition to the will of his parents.

Not long ago I was conversing with a thoughtful and prayerful man concerning his own child, now a mature woman, a decided and devoted Christian, the wife of a Christian minister. He told me, with deep feeling, of his daughter's infancy, and of the solicitude with which he and his wife sought to fulfil their responsibility to God concerning the child he had given them. I am not able to give his words, but what he said was substantially this: "We had had the general and rather vague impression that real governing of our child must begin after she should be old enough to know something of what it should mean, when we should be able to make requirements of her which she could know as such, and could understand that she ought to submit to us and obey us. But she did not wait for that time before she began to show resistance to us. She would stiffen her little body and all its members, as she lay in our arms, or would violently struggle against that to which we thought best to hold her, screaming forth her infantile wrath in inarticulate cries, while yet she could speak no words, nor understand any words in which we could reason with her." What was to be done? Even the physical well-being of the child, the entire condition of her nervous system, was *imperilled*. More alarming still was the

prospect of the child coming to that degree of intelligence for which the parents had proposed to wait, with the habit already formed of putting the whole of her energy into the effort to resist the will of the only beings with whom she had had to do, and the habit of succeeding in that resistance. They were too wise to consent to this. The God whom they trusted did not fail to make them see that then the rightful supremacy of the parental will must be gently, lovingly, but firmly asserted. It cost the child some bodily pain, and doubtless cost it a sharper pain of soul ; it cost the parental hearts keen anguish ;—but the infantile will yielded ; the baby head bowed and drooped in submission ; the whole muscular system relaxed into pliant surrender ; the child awoke from the ensuing sleep with loving smiles, ready for joyous compliance with every parental wish ; and never again did she offer resistance to the will of her parents. She grew up, not only affectionate, amiable, obedient toward her parents, but also prayerful and devout toward God. I suppose that neither she nor her parents would undertake to decide when she became a child of God, and her personal salvation began. As little do I attempt to decide. But at no point does it seem to me more probable than at that *at which she yielded to her parents.* Her conscious

recognition of God's authority and submission to it came long afterward. But who shall say that it did not then come as a matter of course from the state of her will into which God brought her when he heard the prayer of her parents—sweet, willing, affectionate subjection to them?

And have not other parents called upon God and obtained his saving help for their infants earlier still? Are there not some whose parents first took them to their arms with believing, prayerful expectation that, from the very first, God would help them to control them so firmly and so steadily and withal so gently as even to forestall and prevent all uprising of will in opposition? Are there not parents who remember no instance of struggling with an infantile will in rebellion, and whose children remember no time when subjection to the will of parents was not to them a thing of course, and a real comfort and rest? Are there not some such to whom the will of God, as soon as it comes to be known, seems but to encompass the will of their parents, and ready submission to it to be but the natural fulfilment of what they have always felt? I am confident that this is so; I know of nothing in the Bible to forbid this belief; and there are credible witnesses of such experience, extending back to a time beyond which their memory says nothing

to the contrary. There are Christians, of approved piety and devout lives, who have no remembrance of any even momentary struggle against the will of God, however that will may have been revealed to them. There are many such.

We saw that, in adult life, the transition from impenitence to piety is not always characterized by any conscious struggle of opposition to God, ending in peaceful submission to him; that sometimes there is a sense of guilt and exposure, as in the case of the jailer, relieved by learning Christ's power and willingness to save, and by immediate acceptance of the salvation offered; and sometimes, in utmost tranquillity of thoughtful attention, as in the case of the eunuch and of Lydia, the heart is opened to receive the word, and does cordially trust in the Lord Jesus, and go on rejoicing in the way of dutiful obedience to him. We saw that in all this variety of other exercises and features of experience, the one constant and essential thing is the hearty acceptance of Christ as he is offered in the gospel.

How early can this be experienced? How young a child can really trust in Jesus? Who will set a limit of age, before which he will dare to say that a little child cannot come to Jesus? A very little *child can know that he is naughty, and can feel un-*

happy on that account; can know that his naughtiness displeases God as truly as it displeases his father, and grieves Jesus as much as it grieves his mother. A very little child can know and believe that Jesus died on account of his and others' naughtiness, and that Jesus is able and willing to make a naughty little child good and happy. So believing, such a child may trust Jesus as really as he trusts the mother on whose breast he lays his head in the dark chamber. I have said that a very young child may do this. I undertake not to say how young; but my strong belief is that it may be so young that no memory of this will be retained in the future years.

Two notable instances of early piety are recorded in the Bible—Samuel and Timothy. Paul says, in a letter to Timothy himself, "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." He also expresses his confidence that the same faith dwelt in Timothy which dwelt first in his grandmother and mother. Doubtless this might all be said truly of one who became a Christian in later childhood or in youth, who would distinctly remember the time when he became a Christian, but not a time when his mother had not already taught him much of the Scriptures. But at

least Paul makes no mention of such an experience, and would not need to speak differently if Timothy was a child of God from a time to which his own memory did not extend.


The story of young Samuel gives a similar impression of him. It is not necessary to believe that Hannah had any sorrowful remembrance of him as a disobedient child to her, or that Samuel remembered a time when he was not ready to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," so soon as ever he should know that the Lord spoke to him.

Every parent of children, however young, should be encouraged to seek the present salvation of those children—to ask of God that the saving work of his grace may begin now in their souls, and to expect it.

We should also encourage all children to come to Jesus. None are too young. If any child feels himself to be a sinner; if any one feels afraid of God's displeasure and of the wrath to come, there is no need of staying in that unhappiness. The Lord Jesus calls each little child to him now. He is just as ready to begin his work of salvation in the soul of the youngest child as of the wisest man. Yes, sometimes these things are hidden from the wise and *prudent*, and are revealed to babes.

CHAPTER V.

SALVATION AS HEALING.

N our study of the Scripture doctrine of salvation over against the Scripture doctrine of Sin, we have thus far attended only to the beginning of Salvation. We have seen that there is an act of salvation, an act of God's free grace, wherein he at once and sovereignly releases the sinner from the condemnation which his sin has incurred; exempts him from all liability to punishment; rescues him from his exposure to the wrath to come. We have seen that there is a corresponding act of the sinner, without which that gracious act of God does not take place. This is the sinner's sincere acceptance of Jesus Christ as he is offered in the gospel. This voluntary act of acceptance of Christ we saw to be the proper consummation of honest and hearty belief, constituting what has been expressively called "the faith of a transaction." One who has thus

heartily intrusted himself to the Lord Jesus has scriptural warrant for believing that God has done for him that distinct, decisive, sovereign act of free grace. There is a proper and scriptural sense in which such a pardoned, justified man may be called a saved man. We have seen that this beginning act of salvation, on the human side, in the human experience, is attended with a considerable variety of mental exercises, giving us occasion to consider several different types of conversion, or different styles of experience accompanying the soul's transition from impenitence to piety, or becoming a Christian. We have also seen that this experience may occur very early; that the Scriptures give us no right to say that any living human being is too young to enjoy it. Little children may be saved. Infants may be saved. "Babes and sucklings" may be saved. Theirs is a real salvation; as much as was Saul's or the jailer's; as much as is that of any mature sinner now whose sturdy will surrenders to God—whose proud heart, giving up its vain endeavour "to establish its own righteousness," "submits itself unto the righteousness of God." The infant's salvation is not only as real as that of the adult, it is the same salvation, involving the same essential elements, however it may differ in *many attending phenomena*.

But all this pertains to that beginning act which is indeed scripturally called salvation, but which strictly is but the beginning of salvation. It is a decisive beginning, and to it a continuing and a consummation are strongly assured. Yet it is only a beginning. A man who has thus decisively begun his work and experience of salvation, may properly be called a saved man; just as one taken from the water, breathless and pulseless, is declared to be saved, when by the vigorous application of appropriate means his pulse and breath begin again. He is properly said to be saved, just as the physician properly declares that his patient is saved when his professional scrutiny discovers that the fever has passed its crisis. It is a salvation which is real, but which is only begun—decisively begun, yet, it may be, feebly.

It is also to be remembered that the beginning act of salvation is, in its judicial aspect, complete and finished. The sovereign act of God, rescuing the sinner from condemnation, is complete and decisive at once. In that respect, the believing sinner, the sinner accepting Christ, does not then merely begin to be saved; he *is* saved. His justification is an instantaneous, a conclusive, a finished act of God's free grace.

Nevertheless, this divine act of the sinner's justification, concurring with the sinner's believing act of acceptance of Christ, is the beginning of a process which is quite as properly and intelligibly regarded as a process of salvation. That process may profitably be studied in several different aspects. I propose it now in this aspect—*Salvation as Healing*.

This corresponds with one of the aspects in which we viewed sin—*Sin as Disease*. In this aspect we found that sin is frequently and forcibly presented in Scripture. We shall find the same to be true of this aspect of salvation.

The psalmist fervently prays, "Lord, be merciful unto me: *heal* my soul; for I have sinned against thee" (Ps. xli. 4). God promises to *heal* the backsliding of his people (Hos. xiv. 4; Jer. iii. 22). The prophet prays, "*Heal* me, O Lord, and I shall be *healed*; *save* me, and I shall be *saved*" (Jer. xvii. 14). The forgiveness of iniquities and the healing of diseases are frequently associated in both the Old Testament and the New.

This is not merely that bodily disease and infirmity and deformity are regarded as analogous to sinful conditions of the soul, nor that they come in consequence of sin. But, besides these facts, it is seen *that the soul is as really and essentially harmed by*

sin as the body by disease. A sinful soul is a damaged soul. It is not merely liable to be hurt hereafter in consequence of its sin and as a punishment for it. It is hurt already. Its faculties are disordered by it, impaired, deteriorated. They are thrown out of harmony, out of order, as really as are the forces in a machine by some loosening of its screws or bands, or some misshaping of its wheels or rods, or some loss of strength or elasticity in its springs; as really as are the vital forces in our bodies, by the ulceration of any organ, or by any excess or deficiency, or irregularity in the action of any organ—as when the brain is softened, or the bones are made brittle, or some muscular tissue is changed into bone, or the heart beats too swiftly or too slowly, too strongly or too feebly. We have not rightly understood sin if we have considered it only as exposing us to a death to be inflicted judicially, in fulfilment of a sentence pronounced against us. It does expose us to this, and from this we are at once and completely saved by God's gracious act of justification immediately on our acceptance of Christ. But there is a death already experienced, from which also we need to be saved, and our salvation from which is not thus instantly completed. The apostle Paul declares that "to be carnally minded *is* death" (Rom. viii. 6); and writing

to the Ephesians (ii. 1), he speaks of them as having previously been "dead in trespasses and sins," and as having then been made alive by the Spirit of God.

Let us not press these expressions too far, nor enter into any minute questions of interpretation which are unnecessary for our present purpose. These are specimens of Paul's writing, the ordinary tone of which shows that Paul regarded all sinful souls not merely as liable to be put to death by-and-by, like a criminal under sentence awaiting his execution, but as in a process of death already, like a man subject to a disease which is steadily eating its way to the vital centre. This is not only Paul's view, but the view which pervades the whole Bible. Call this evil condition of the soul death, or call it disease; you probably have in your own mind and convey to other minds the same impression. Disease is death in process. Death is disease consummated. To be healed is to be delivered from death; is to be made truly alive.

Let us understand, then, that the Lord Jesus, when he says, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," says also, "Arise and walk." He comes to us, and speaks to us, and sits down and talks with us, not merely as a messenger sent from the court of the Divine King, offering us *pardon and amnesty* for offences, and putting into our

hands documents, sealed with blood, which we may by-and-by present at the judgment-seat, to secure us from sentence being pronounced against us there; but also as a skilful physician, gently and faithfully inquiring into the condition of our enfeebled, distorted, diseased souls, and offering us help, and relief, and healing. He asks us to believe in him, in this character as well as in the other. He asks us to trust him for healing as much as for forgiveness. He asks us not only to take the sealed documents of pardon from his hand with no misgiving doubt of their validity, but also to let him lay his hands on us, that divine virtue may come forth from him, to make us whole of whatsoever disease we have; whatsoever form or type of the disease of sin—whether its blindness, its benumbing paralysis, or its polluting and consuming leprosy.

In more literal, though I can scarcely think more intelligible phrase, we are to trust the Lord Jesus, not only to save us from the punishment which should be judicially inflicted for sin, but to deliver us from the sin itself which deserves such infliction. This deliverance is a process, not an instantaneous act. We are saved from condemnation instantly, and once for all, as a man's life is saved instantly when a messenger comes from the capital with the pardon

signed and sealed by the governor, just when the sheriff is leading him out from the cell to set him under the gallows.

Our salvation from the wrath to come, our rescue from condemnation, is thus sudden, and instantaneous, and complete. But not so is our soul's healing, our cure from sin. Sin in us, an evil possession, deranging, impairing, enfeebling, perverting the whole structure of our spiritual being, is not instantly and once for all cast out. Our being made whole is not an act, but a process. It is a *work* of God's free grace, on which he spends time, and employs means and agencies, especially our own agency, bidding us "work out our own salvation," cautioning us against heedlessness and presumptuous confidence, warning us of danger, bidding us do this work "with fear and trembling," yet withal breathing into us strength and courage by the assurance that God himself "worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure."

The analogy between the ordinary process of recovery of our bodies from sickness, and the recovery of our souls from the disease of sin, is as scriptural as it is obvious. In saying this, we do not overlook the fact that Jesus did, in many instances, by his word or touch, suddenly and instantaneously cure *inveterate* diseases of long standing—blindness from

birth, infirmity which had been borne "thirty and eight years." We do not forget that in our cure from sin we depend upon the divine power of this same Mighty One. We do not deny that instant and complete deliverance of a soul from all indwelling sin, from all disposition, tendency, liability to sin, is possible, in some proper and scriptural sense. But, as a matter of fact, the Scriptures give us no examples of such deliverance; they give us many examples of the saving process already affirmed; and the general tone and tenor of Scripture instructions to believers in Christ (that is, to pardoned men and women) evidently contemplate such a process, long and patiently carried forward, with obedient and persevering endeavour, sustained by continuous and persistent trust in Christ's gracious help, or in the helpful indwelling and inworking of the Holy Spirit,—for between these two there is no practical or discernible distinction. (See John xiv. 15-23.)

In our study of sin as disease, we considered it with reference to (1) our *natural desires*; (2) our *wills*; and (3) our *consciences*.

Let us inquire now how the Lord Jesus saves us in these same respects.

1. As to our *natural desires*. When our eyes are opened to see ourselves as we are, we find that our

natural desires have somehow fallen into an unnatural condition. What man or woman of us all has not some desires that are unnaturally strong, and some that are unnaturally weak? Who of us do not, in the vehemence of desires toward that in which we ought not to indulge, or in the languor of desires toward that which we ought to pursue, find ourselves convicted of sin? Who of us do not, right here, find and feel sad evidence that sin is in us as disease, marring, enfeebling, corrupting us? Wherein more evidently than in this do we need the help of the Great Physician? No more signal examples of this can be found than in bodily appetites. We sometimes hear men testify that, in simple answer to prayer, they suddenly find themselves released from an appetite for intoxicating drink whereby they had long been enslaved. That such help is sometimes given, is not to be doubted consistently with the respect due to these honest men's testimony, nor with proper regard for the promises of Christ recorded in Scripture. How far this answer to prayer involves a direct and supernatural operation upon these men's minds, and how far it is by means of natural physiological and mental forces, it is not necessary now to decide, nor do I think that we can *yet* decide. Neither should we let our minds be so

much engaged with God's answer to this prayer in this way or on this side of these men's experience, as to assume that there is no answer in any other way or on another side of the experience. Suddenly increased strength of purpose to resist appetite might be as great a blessing and as kind an answer to prayer as the sudden taking away of appetite ; and no less would be a victory over appetite slowly and laboriously gained by means of patient effort, with studious use of physical and mental means, and even after many mortifying failures and humiliations.

It behoves any one who is thus enslaved to pray with full confidence in Christ's power, and full submission to whatever methods he may choose to employ.

There are other appetites as difficult to subdue, and which, uncontrolled, work as fearful ruin and degradation. There is no one who comes to Christ for pardon, and receiving it becomes his disciple, who does not then need his gracious help, to deal with his own perverse desires, to restrain them, to regulate them—to strengthen perhaps and invigorate some of them.

2. There is no reason to doubt the Lord's ability and willingness to restore and invigorate, and enthrone over all natural desires, that sublime power of

will which belongs to our human nature, and which is so debased and enfeebled or perverted by sin. There are appropriate means to be studied and applied for the remedy of this deep disease and the rectifying of this perverseness. But there is no good hope of their successful application, unless they are accompanied with a direct divine influence. The full and unreserved surrender of our wills to God will not impair nor debilitate them: it will put us into the best possible condition to receive from him the salutary influence needed, to restore them to full health and vigour, and to enthrone them in their proper dominion over all our desires and impulses.

3. No less do we need Christ's healing of our *consciences*. That sad loss of sensibility, which, when carried to the extreme, the Scripture calls having them "seared as with a hot iron," in greater or less degree has befallen the consciences of us all. When we are saved from condemnation; when we are sheltered from the wrath to come; when we are at peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; then surely we are in a far better situation than before to receive influences favourable to the health of our consciences. It is right to pray that the Lord Jesus *will help* us in this; that he will deliver us from

callous numbness of conscience on the one hand, and from morbid sensitiveness on the other; and from stings and tortures and worries of a bewildered and darkened conscience.

We are not entitled to expect his answer to this prayer without our faithful use of the means of grace. The diligent study of the Bible; faithful attendance upon the ordinances of the gospel; the wholesome influence of Christian companionship and association; constant, thoughtful endeavours to do good—all these are proper means of restoring health to enfeebled or disordered consciences. We are to use these means, but to remember always that only the present help of God, the direct influence of his Spirit, will make them effectual, and nothing else will keep us to the faithful use of them.

This consideration of sin as disease, and correspondingly of salvation as healing, condemns the harsh judgment which many pass upon faulty Christians. There are not a few who virtually pronounce all professors of religion who have great faults hypocrites; or else they infer that the religion whose professors may have great faults is a delusion. No doubt our religion is to cure our faults; it is to heal our diseased, sin-sick souls: but it takes time to do it. Our Physician is very patient with us. We try his

patience sadly, by not taking his medicines better nor practising the means of improvement which he prescribes for us more faithfully, and by indulging ourselves in many things which he has told us are not good for us. Doubtless we often dishonour him, and harm ourselves, and hinder others from trusting him. This is too bad. But, after all, any candid person may see that exactly in proportion to any diseased soul's real trust in Jesus, shown by faithful compliance with his directions and faithful use of his appointed means, that soul's spiritual health is restored. There is no room to doubt this. A physician's skill is not shown directly by the health of those who consult him, but by the degree of improvement which results from that consultation. This may have been greater in one who is yet very ill than in one who is now fully restored.

This view encourages those who are conscious of great faults, but who cleave to Christ in affectionate trust. He came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Some of the disciples who followed him in Galilee and Judea had great faults, even when they had been his disciples a long time; but he never lost patience with them. *He cast off* only the one who was utterly insincere.

Cling to him in affectionate trust, however faulty you may be, and he will cling to you with patient love, and shed upon you gracious influence, until he can present you faultless before his Father.


There is no greater mistake than trying to get rid of faults before coming to Christ, or delaying to come to him until we shall be rid of them.

“ Just as I am—and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come !

“ Just as I am—poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, *healing* of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come ! ”

CHAPTER VI.

SALVATION A RETURN TO GOD.

N that beautiful word-picture which Luke has given us from the Lord Jesus, the parable of the Prodigal Son, the situation and condition of the wanderer "when he had spent all," is powerfully depicted. Whose mind, attending to that parable, does not see the unhappy youth in that "far country," out in the fields alone, among the swine he is tending, penniless, hungry, friendless, home-sick? Whose heart does not feel that there is infinite pathos in that sight? If we were standing together before a painting of that scene—any dozen of us—and if each of us were asked to point out the feature which impressed him most strongly, it is not likely that we should all point to the same feature. This might depend upon the angle from which each took his view, or upon the special susceptibility of *each*, or upon some recent or some long past experi-

ence with which there would be some vivid association. And yet it might be, that if any one in such a group should mention the particular point upon which his eye fastened, or the thought to which the picture specially called his mind, all might find increased pleasure in looking together upon that point, and engaging their minds together upon that thought with conscious sympathy.

Thinking their thoughts aloud—such a group—one might say, “How hungry ~~he~~ he looks! See his hollow cheeks and sunken eyes.” Another might say, “What an expression of shame the artist has put into his face! See him gaze, with such disgust, at the unclean animals he is obliged to feed, Jew that he is, taught from childhood to loathe them! He must be bitterly remembering the folly which has brought him to such degradation.” Some one else says, “He has only himself to blame. He is too intelligent not to know it. He is taking the blame to himself. That look on his face is, to my eye, the look of remorse. It says, ‘*I have sinned.*’” And I can easily fancy some affectionate, motherly woman, listening silently to all these remarks, and when all are waiting to know what she thinks, turning away from the picture, and saying, as she catches their inquiring glance, “He’s just home-sick.”

If the artist himself were within hearing, perhaps he would say that they were all right; that every one of the features named belongs to the picture, and every one of these thoughts enters into the complex conception. Yet I should not be surprised to see a look of the greatest satisfaction spread over his face at that last suggestion—" *He is home-sick.*" Certainly every pang of the hunger that has so pinched that cheek and wasted the muscles that used to brace that frame, reminds him of the father's house, in which even the servants "have bread enough and to spare." Every remorseful thought of the riotous scenes in which he has "wasted his substance," recalls the venerable figure and grave face of his father, as he took from his hand the money which should be his portion of the inheritance. Every glance at the coarse beasts before him, champing and trampling the pods which he has thrown out to them, must remind him of the field in which his elder brother is working, or overseeing the hired labourers, and from which at eventide he will walk home, past fruitful olive orchards, and along trellises laden with purpling clusters, soothed from his weariness by the gentle lowing of kine, and the contented bleating of clean flocks, as he goes to his wholesome supper, and his clean bed, and his father's benediction.

All this poverty, all this hunger, all this shame, all this guilty degradation and wretchedness have resulted from leaving that father, coming away from that home.

As these thoughts work on his mind ; as this sorrow "worketh repentance ;" as the distress of mind at length produces a change of mind (2 Cor. vii. 10) ; see the form which his resolution naturally and fitly takes : "I will arise, and go to my father." As all the misery and guilt have come by departing from his father, the only way out of them is by a return to his father.

We need not try to fancy him utterly forgetful of his own personal needs and cravings, and thinking only of his father. We need not doubt that he hopes to be fed by his father's bounty, even if he does doubt whether he can ever again sit at his father's table. He cannot expect to remain hungry or in rags either in or near his father's house. We can scarcely doubt that he hopes for the comfort and rest of forgiving words spoken by his father's voice. But do not all our hearts tell us that his deepest and strongest feeling is the desire to be with his father ? His heart cannot rest until neither the distance of a far country nor the distance of unforgiven undutifulness any longer separates them.

This state of sin and misery in which we are—all mankind—the worst of it is its separating us from God. The only real and effectual salvation from it is a return to God.

This hiding and shrinking away of souls from “the Father of spirits,” like Adam and Eve hiding themselves among the trees of the garden (Gen. iii. 8); this insane disposition to say unto God, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,” of which Job spoke (xxi. 14); this separation from God and hiding his face from us which Isaiah ascribes to sin (lix. 2); this being “without God in the world,” of which Paul wrote (Eph. ii. 12);—it is from these that we need to be recovered. Sin is all these. Sinners are, comprehensively, wanderers from God. Return to him is salvation. Returning to God, we are saved. Let us try to understand this returning to God, this coming home to our heavenly Father, from whom all our sin is a foolish and wicked wandering.

1. By what way can we come to Him? The Lord Jesus answers this question in words which his beloved John reports to us: “No man cometh unto the Father but by me.....I am the way” (John xiv. 6)—“One mediator between God and men, the man *Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim. ii. 5)—“When we were

enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. v. 10)—"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. v. 18)—"Whom God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 25, 26)—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). The atoning work of Christ—his suffering and death on the cross—was necessary, in order that God might consent to let us come back to him. He could not take us back, could not let us come home, could not restore us to the position and condition of children, happy in his favour, without that atonement.

Why not? Is God revengeful? Doth he keep his anger for ever? Is he implacable? Must he, like some cruel tyrant, be bought off from wreaking his vengeance on guilty men by the opportunity to wreak it on one so strong to endure it, so exalted in nature and position, and so innocent as Jesus? So revoltingly is the doctrine of atonement represented

by some who reject it. So understood, I do not wonder at the rejection of it. If any honestly so understand it, I do not blame them for rejecting it. To be reconciled to such a God would not seem to me to be salvation. There is no such God in heaven. There is no such doctrine in the Bible. There is no such perversion of the Bible doctrine in any evangelical creed, nor in any evangelical pulpit. It is only so caricatured in unevangelical pulpits, and in a very pretentious but very shallow sort of literature. All who read the Bible know that the God whom it reveals "hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked." He swears by himself that he hath not, since he can swear by no greater: "As I live, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). He gave his only begotten Son, that Son freely consenting and giving himself, because he "so loved the world." In nothing is the eternal agreement and union of the Son and the Father more evident than in this. The Father gave the Son, and the Son "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God" (Heb. ix. 14). The whole Godhead, in his entire personality and being, in harmony of all his infinite perfections, in the exercise of all his wisdom and power and grace, laboured to save guilty man. He was ready to sacrifice everything but his own character for our sake.

The only difficulty was how to be just and justify us; how to have it right to pardon us; how to let us come back, home into his favour, without his ceasing to be the just, the holy, the good God, whose favour is life to holy creatures. Will you call it stern or harsh or revengeful that he would not try to save us on any other terms than such as would thus secure his own character? What if he were capable of consenting to the sacrifice of his own character to save us? Could he save us thus? Would it be salvation to be received into the favour of a God who in the very act of so receiving us would cease to be worthy of our reverence or our trust? Shall the prodigal wish to come home and be received by his father on terms which will degrade the father to baseness like that from which he himself needs to be reclaimed, and make that home fit only for a sty for the unclean beasts he has been tending?

There are no words lawful to be written, there are no figures fit to be presented, which can at all adequately represent the unreasonableness of the demand that God should clear the guilty from deserved condemnation without an adequate substitute for the penalty of his law, without a satisfaction to his own eternal justice.

While his Word has preserved to us the full assur-

ance of his holiness and his love, it has made it equally plain that, in his estimation, the sacrifice of his Son, freely offering himself, does remove all that difficulty; does make it right for him to offer us pardon; does enable him to justify all who believe in Jesus, and still be *just*; does enable him to receive home all guilty wanderers who will come back in this way, and take us into his favour equally with the unfallen seraphs, without ceasing to be worthy of their song, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts."

This, then, is the way in which we can return to God, can go home to our Father's house. Christ is the way.

2. How are we to go in this way? The answer to this question is "the old, old story." It is the old apostolic answer to the old anxious question, "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Trust the Lord Jesus; trust your soul to him, your all, your eternity. Close your long thinking about him by thankfully accepting him. Bring your long consultation with him to its fitting conclusion by distinctly committing yourself to him. Consummate the belief of your understanding by issuing it into "the faith of a transaction."

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter *into the holiest* by the blood of Jesus, by a new and

living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ; and having an high priest over the house of God ; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water " (Heb. x. 19-22).

Thus, through this "new and living way," simply by trusting ourselves to the Lord Jesus for his expiation of our guilt and reconciling God to us, do we come back to God from our wretched and guilty wandering.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit " (Rom. viii. 1). "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God " (Eph. ii. 19). You have come home, and are met with a Father's affectionate and hearty welcome. Here you are. The swine, and the husks, and the dismal field are far away : as far the wine, and the dance, and the guilty revelry wherewith you were impoverished and degraded. You are at the home door, and the Father's arms are about you ; and you hear him order the fatted calf to be killed, and harps and viols and glad voices are filling all the house with music.

3. Are you then saved? Is your salvation finished? Yes and No. You are saved from condemnation. You are recovered from that sad and guilty estrangement. You are no more a wilful wanderer from your Father's house. You are restored. You are reconciled. You are generously welcomed. You are a child of God, having received Christ and believed on his name (John i. 12). "He that believeth on him is not condemned" (John iii. 18). You are now a child of God, acknowledged and loved as such. But you are a faulty child. You are saved from condemnation, but you have only begun to be saved from sin. You are rescued from exposure to the wrath to come, but you are not cured of the disease of sin. You are convalescent, but you are not yet well. You have come home from the far country. You are within the Father's house. But are you yet as near the good Father as you wish to be? Is there not yet much which you feel to be separating between you and him, preventing that near access which you long for, and, if not hiding his face from you, at least obscuring your view of it? Verily your salvation is a prosperously begun work. It is a process which is to be carried forward. I have a friend of fourscore and twelve years. I have talked with him often, and *have always* found him making a modest estimate of

his own life and attainments as a Christian, and avowing a simple trust in our Redeemer. He now knows that the time cannot be far distant when (if ever) he shall be "with the Lord." What now is his ground of hope that he shall be ready for that? He makes no mention of his services or attainments. He says with exceeding simplicity that he feels assured of God's ability to finish what he has begun. It is still a life of trust—as truly so now, so near its end, as in all its earlier stages. Even so saith the scripture: "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" (Heb. iii. 14).

"The beginning of our confidence." There must be the same reliance upon Christ all the way that there was at the beginning. There must be constant adherence to him, with the same compliant and obedient trust with which we first committed ourselves to him. In him only, by his grace strengthening us, can we successfully subdue our desires, and bring every part of ourselves into obedient subjection to the will of God. By him only can our sin-diseased natures be restored to spiritual health. In whatever aspect we view it, and by whatever types we represent it, in Christ is all our salvation and all our hope.

We are viewing it now in the aspect of return to

God. As the beginning of our salvation is a decisive turning from the world, and coming to God by Christ, the living way; so the process of salvation is a drawing nearer to God—even nearer and nearer, into closer and closer fellowship.

Dependent as we are upon Christ for this, it is not the same kind of dependence as was that for expiation of our guilt. In that there was nothing for us to do; "Jesus paid it all." But in this, while "without him we can do nothing," we "can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth" us.


We are to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 12, 13). It is a work in which all our thoughtfulness and all our energy are to be engaged, yet always with the humble recollection that only Christ's ever-present help can give us success.

Much effort is unsuccessful, much labour lost, by failing to consider our work of sanctification in this aspect, as a coming nearer to God. This "work of God's free grace" within us quickens and stirs and guides all the powers of our being to the continual effort after nearer access to him, closer fellowship with him. To draw nearer unto God; to become like him; *to become free from whatever would separate between*

us and him ; to become such in character and spirit that we shall be in sympathy with him, shall have the same likes and dislikes with him, hating only what he hates, and loving all that he loves; to “walk with God,” as two can only walk together who “are agreed”—this is salvation.

CHAPTER VII.

SALVATION A RECOVERY FROM DELUSION.

N our study of sin, we found it important to consider the illusions which belong to it; the delusiveness wherewith, at the beginning in Eden, and all the way down the successive ages and generations, its victims have been beguiled. We saw that sin is delusive, and sinners are deluded, especially in two ways: (1) as to the results of sin; (2) as to its character. Men sin under the expectation of pleasant results which are never realized, and under a delusion which blinds them to its exceeding guiltiness.

A true salvation must include deliverance from these illusions. Such deliverance is made very prominent among the various aspects of salvation set forth in the Bible.

The psalmist prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that *I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*" A

fuller and clearer revelation was not what he so much felt the need of, as a better capacity to use and enjoy the revelation already given. Not more light, but better eyes, opened eyes, eyes cured of their amaurosis, their insensibility to light, or whatever morbid obstruction there might be to the entrance of light into them. Remove the cataract. Quicken the torpid nerve. Give me clear, accurate, healthy eyesight.

Isaiah, in his glorious vision of the world's population coming to God, flocking to Mount Zion, hears them calling, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." From the darkness of paganism, the saved nations are to come into the light that shines forth "out of Zion, the perfection of beauty." The psalmist reverently and thankfully declares to Jehovah his own expectation to see light in his light, that light whereof the fountain is with him (Ps. xxxvi. 9).

In the New Testament announcements of the Son of God incarnate, come into the world to accomplish the foretold salvation, we read, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." This seems to intimate that his coming among men is not so much to increase the outward illumination falling upon them, as the inward power to see by means of the illumination. The life is the light. Again, Jesus himself is

reported by John as declaring himself "the light of the world," and promising that those who follow him shall have "the light of life."

The apostle John, in his First Epistle (i. 5-7), shows his own mind full of this conception of salvation. It is ever, with him, walking in the light, and being fully delivered from darkness.

In that charming parable in which the Lord so admirably illustrates the sinner's coming home to God, he does not fail to recognize the prodigal's escape from the delusion which had impoverished and degraded him, as the very first stage of his recovery. "He came to himself." He gave rational consideration to his forlorn and miserable situation, in contrast with what, but for his own madness, he might be enjoying in his father's house. This rational consideration soon led to the rational resolve—"I will arise, and go to my father."

The phrase, "came to himself," is an expressive one. It is literally rendered from the Greek as written by Luke. The figure has such a natural significance as needs little exposition. To be beside one's self, to be out of one's mind, or out of one's head; and, on the other hand, to be restored to one's mind, or to come to himself, are expressions which everybody understands. But does everybody understand and consider

that for a sinner to become a Christian is, first of all, to become rational, to come to himself ?

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah” (Isa. i. 18).

“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies,” said the psalmist (Ps. cxix. 59).

What say you to this proposition: “*A reasonable view of ourselves and of Christ, simply and reasonably acted upon, is salvation*”? Does any one dispute this proposition? Does any one doubt or question it?

Let us look into it more particularly. Let us take it apart, and look carefully at its several members.

A reasonable view of ourselves—how shall we get it? Being sinners, we have already seen that it is natural for us to take an unreasonable view of ourselves, a partial and prejudiced view, prejudiced in our own favour, a view of ourselves more flattering than the truth would justify. We shall all agree that God, our maker and judge, sees us as we are, knows us perfectly, judges us infallibly. The view which he takes of us must be a reasonable view, a view to which no just objection can be made. Do not we all assent to this? Do not we all feel this? If God were now to speak to us from heaven, if he were to “call the earth from the rising of the sun unto

the going down thereof," announcing himself as about to declare his divine judgment of us, his infallible view of our state and character, would not we all listen, ready to accept that solemn and authoritative declaration? But could God utter his judgment of us more clearly than he has long ago caused it to be written in his Word?

"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are together become filthy: none that doeth good, no, not one" (Ps. xiv. 2, 3). Is there one of us who will take issue with God, frankly and plainly, and refuse to be thus estimated? Is there one of us who will deny that God's view, so clearly stated in his Word, is the reasonable view of us, the view which, whenever we come to ourselves, we must take of ourselves? Do not we all admit that any more flattering or less humbling view of ourselves which we are inclined to take is a false view, a delusion to which our sinfulness has exposed us? Then let us take God's view; let us accept it and submit to it. Let us give up our own view, the flattering view of ourselves to which our selfish pride clings so fondly, and confess that we have "all gone aside," have "all gone astray like lost sheep," have "all sinned and come

short of the glory of God." If we do not feel as deeply as we see to be proper the guilt and the shame of this, still let us frankly confess the fact, submitting to God's judgment. In that proper attitude of submission, perhaps he will shed upon us the grace whereby our eyes may be opened, and we may be enabled to see wondrous things out of his law. We have read of a poor servant girl, illiterate and ignorant, whom a minister advised to offer to God, day by day, this simple prayer: "*O Lord, show me MYSELF.*" Obeying the wise direction, the poor child daily knelt alone, before Him who seeth in secret, and thus honestly prayed. She really and sincerely wished to know how wicked, how guilty, how vile she was in the sight of the Holy One. She really and truly wished to know what God thought of her, and was willing to bear the necessary pain and shame of thinking just so of herself. The result soon was a very deep conviction of sin, a very humble sense of her guilt and need. She felt herself to be "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." So any one is likely soon to feel who thus honestly places himself before the holy God, and asks to be made to see himself in his light; yet let it be carefully noted, the vivid painfulness of this conviction is not the measure of its value, but the soul's willingness to submit to

God's estimate and decision. He has come to himself, who sees that not his own estimate of himself, but God's estimate of him is reliable, and who accordingly takes God's estimate, and humbles himself submissively under it.

What now is a *reasonable view of Christ*? Surely we must be guided to a right answer to this question in the same way. What think we of Christ, ought to be determined by what God says of Christ; what Christ says of himself. That there is no difficulty in understanding all this, as it is written in holy Scripture, I shall not pretend. I cannot deny that there is difficulty in making out and defining the exact meaning of some of those great things which are written of the Christ. I shall not claim that all honest disciples do understand all those divine sayings rightly, or do all understand them alike. Nicodemus did not understand all that Christ said to him, "teacher of Israel" though he was. Peter and John did not understand all that he spoke to them while he was with them; and it put Thomas's mind to a painful strain even to believe all that his dear Lord said—so hard was it for him to believe what he could not understand—to accept, even from his Lord, simple affirmation without explanation. But I think that *Thomas at last* concluded that it was more reasonable

for him to take Christ's word than to depend on his own reasonings. Christ was gently teaching him that lesson in that conversation recorded by John, when Jesus had told the disciples that he was going away from them, away from the world, unto the Father. Thomas was anxious to be told the way to that house of "many mansions," and Jesus replied to him, "I am the way" (John xiv. 6). Not then at once did Thomas learn that lesson of implicit trust. But when to the risen Jesus, showing him the wounds in his hands and side, Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God," then, I think, Thomas had pretty thoroughly learned that lesson. It is time that we had learned it. Just now I am trying to show what is a reasonable view of Christ, and I insist that such a view may and does include some things which we must believe to be true, which yet we cannot explain nor understand. The fact of his resurrection, his being visibly and tangibly alive again, after he had been dead, was so clearly demonstrated to Thomas, that he could no longer refuse to believe it, although it could not be explained. So also was it reasonable for Thomas fully to trust Jesus as to the way to the Father's house, although Jesus did not seek to explain it to him. He was just to believe that in due time Jesus would bring him thither.

He was the way. Very much like that, altogether like that, is the reasonable view for us to take of Christ. We are not to expect to understand him, to be able to explain, nor to have satisfactorily explained to us, all the high truths concerning his person, or concerning his work. But without that, and far short of that, we can know that his power is ample for the task he has undertaken; that he is accepted and acknowledged by the Father as having made a sufficient satisfaction to his justice for our sins, and as "able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him." This I affirm to be a reasonable view of Christ. It is repeatedly, variously, continually presented and insisted upon in the New Testament, and is there presented as the fulfilment of all the teachings concerning salvation in all the Old Testament Scriptures. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4). He is "the Lamb of God, bearing the sin of the world" (John i. 29). He "of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). In short, nothing could be made plainer than it is made plain in Scripture, that Jesus Christ is our all-sufficient Saviour; that whatever was necessary to be suffered on account of our sins, he has freely suffered, "long, long ago,"

and "once for all;" that whatever needs to be done to assure our justification at the bar of God, he is able to do, and has undertaken to do; that he also undertakes to supply all the gracious help we need for the Christian life on the earth, and for our safe and sure entrance into heaven, when our life on earth is ended. It is reasonable to regard him as competent for all that he undertakes, reliable for all that he promises. Now with this reasonable view of ourselves, which the word of God so irresistibly gives us, as simply lost sinners, guilty, condemned, helpless; and with this reasonable view of Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour, ready and willing to undertake for us all that we need—what is the only reasonable action?

Does not the actual acceptance of Christ, actual commitment of ourselves to him, follow as a matter of course? We should certainly think so, in any secular matter. To see a great need, and at the same time to see at hand an ample and available supply of that need, and not promptly avail ourselves of it, is certainly the height of unreasonableness. We cannot account for men acting thus, unless they are under the influence of some delusion.

In nothing is the deceitfulness of sin more painfully shown than exactly in this failure of impenitent minds to act reasonably in view of the gospel, in

respect to Christ's offer to be their Saviour. In nothing, I think, are thoughtful, impenitent persons more a puzzle to themselves than in this.

The little serving-maid whose simple prayer, "O Lord, show me myself," was soon answered in deep conviction of her guilt and need, was then advised to pray, "*O Lord, show me THYSELF.*" Daily she offered up this prayer in deep sincerity; and after a little while there was vouchsafed to her such a view of God in Christ, of his tender and infinite pity for her, and his ability and disposition to save her, that she was filled with peace. She had found the Saviour. Rather, the Saviour had found her. You who have so long known the way of salvation, as well as men can show it to you—pastors, and teachers, and parents—do not you need to have God show it to you by his Spirit? Ye who have so long known Christ with your heads, but have not known him with your hearts, is it not best for you to take up the little maiden's prayer, and beg the Lord to show himself to you?

Recall the experience of Paul as he tells it to the Galatians (i. 15, 16). He speaks there of God, who had set him apart, even from his birth, unto the apostleship which he at last fulfilled, at a definite point in his life, "*revealing his Son in him.*" Then,


when he was thus made to know Christ with his heart, he says, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." We understand him to mean that he then needed no human counsel, because the Lord directly revealed to him all that was needful for the fulfilment of his mission.

That call to the apostleship was peculiar. But in that revealing of the Son of God in Paul, was there not also an enabling him to see Jesus as his own Saviour, trusting in whom he found peace with God? I have no doubt of this; and I know of no person who lacks that peace with God whom I would not gladly persuade to pray unto God thus to reveal his Son in him.

If you will do this, if day by day, in that childlike simplicity, you will ask the Lord to show himself to you, I believe that you then will not need to "confer with flesh and blood;" but will find his gracious power delivering you from the illusions of sin; find yourselves truly "beholding the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

CHAPTER VIII.

SALVATION OF HOUSEHOLDS.

N our study of Sin, we found one of its saddest aspects to be its hereditariness, our being involved in its guilt and misery, not as isolated individuals, but as a race, in our families and generations, all the way from our first parents. Our first parents sinned and fell when they two were all mankind; when they were the only human persons existing; when, in a serious and true sense, all their posterity were yet in them. The consequence of this evidently is, that all their posterity are sinners, exposed to the wrath of God, and needing salvation. The different theories by which theologians have tried to explain this, or to account for it, and show its consistency with the justice and goodness of our Maker, were purposely excluded from consideration. These are products of human speculation, by which faith must not be bound, and upon

which faith does not depend for its saving efficacy. More and more, theologians are finding that they can "agree to differ" in those speculations, and yet know each other to hold alike and with equal tenacity all the facts asserted in the Scriptures. We can also agree to neglect those speculations, and hold fast those solemn, awful, grand facts.

It is an interesting and by no means an unpractical question, whether salvation comes to us wholly as separate individuals, or comes to us in the association in which we exist and live—particularly, whether our closest association in families has any vital connection with our experience of salvation.

In the New Testament records of the actual experience of salvation, the family relation has the same prominence as in all secular experience and history. Men and women were habitually addressed and dealt with by the Lord Jesus, and by his apostles, both in their preaching and in their epistles, not as isolated persons, but as related persons, bound together by domestic ties, grouped together in households, interested in each other, influencing each other, loving each other as husbands and wives, as parents and children, as brothers and sisters—in short, as families. There is everywhere a recognition of home, *of that dwelling together, that interlacing*

of relations, that blending of interests and experiences, of which the word "home" is so sweetly and so powerfully significant.

Did ever any one, to whom the gospel of salvation was to be preached by Jesus himself, seem more alone than the little man who climbed up into a tree to see him, near Jericho? But Jesus bade him "come down," and take him home with him; and there he said, "This day is salvation come to *this house*." Now the word "house," in the language in which Luke wrote, as in our own, and probably in all others, has a twofold meaning. It may denote the material building in which a human family live, or the human family who live in that building. It may mean a human dwelling-place, or the natural cluster or association of human beings who dwell together therein. In this case, it certainly is possible to understand our Lord, in the words which Luke has recorded, as saying simply, "Salvation has taken place, or become a fact, this day, *in this house*."* But is it possible to understand him as thinking of the house merely as a material building, and not chiefly as a human dwelling-place? Although no mention is made of Zaccheus's domestic relations, and we do not

* "Ὅτι σήμερον σωτηρία τῇ οἰκῇ τούτῳ ἐγένετο.

know whether he was married, do we not most naturally imagine him as the head of a family, into the midst of which he ushered his newly-found Saviour, and to whom the gracious words of the Saviour came as cheerfully as to himself, "*This day is salvation come to this house*"? We do not affirm this. It would not be right to affirm that of which the Scripture is silent. But I do think it is natural to think of Zaccheus as most probably the head of a family, which was blessed with him in the Saviour's coming into their home. I also think that this natural supposition is encouraged by the manner in which the Scriptures do speak of other instances in which salvation came to men in their homes.

When the Philippian jailer, trembling and astonished at the earthquake, and convinced of his soul's guilt and peril by the Spirit of God, fell down before Paul and Silas and asked what he must do to be saved, they answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house.*" The narrative proceeds to state that the same "word of the Lord" which was blessed to the jailer for his salvation was presently spoken "to all that were in his house;" and that he "was baptized, and all his straightway;" also, that "he set food before

them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

The nice questions, whether there were any infant children in that house; whether, if there were, they were baptized; or whether we are to understand the phrases "all his," "all his house," and "all that were in his house," in the connection and relations in which they are used, as denoting only all those persons dwelling there who could and did intelligently hear "the word of the Lord," and did intelligently "believe in God"—these are questions on which sincere Christian students of the New Testament are not entirely agreed. We, who hold to the scriptural propriety, and estimate above all price the privilege of presenting our children to God in baptism, cannot fairly claim that it is put beyond all question by this passage alone. Indeed I am not disposed to claim that it is quite put beyond question by all that we have in Scripture. My own mind is satisfied, and rests with unutterable delight in the assurance, that when I presented the children which God gave me, in his house to receive the baptismal token, and when so often I have taken the infant children of my people in my arms, and placed that sweet token upon them, in the name of the Father, the Son, and *the Holy Ghost*, I have acted as certainly within my

scriptural privilege as did any devout Israelite who set the seal of God's everlasting covenant upon his offspring, in its own blood. Being assured by inspired Paul, that, if I believe in Jesus, I am as good an Israelite as he; that being in Christ I am of Abraham's seed, and an heir according to the promise—I confidently claim the privilege of having that promise sealed to me, and to my seed after me, by that milder token which I understand to be in the place of the bloody token of old. Yet I cheerfully testify that I have intimate acquaintance and precious fellowship with sincere believers in Jesus, who do not see that the visible token of faith and of consecration may scripturally be put upon the offspring of believers, but think that the word of God, fairly interpreted, requires it to be put only upon the persons of believers. I cheerfully and thankfully testify that I have found such Christians able to sympathize fully with us in all that we mean by the baptism of our infants, though not seeing it right to apply baptism for the expression of that meaning. They consecrate their children to Christ; they invoke for them his gracious blessing; they ask for their early renewal by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit; they believe in and pray for this spiritual renewing even in infancy; but do not think it scriptural to apply

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the sacramental token until the child can make intelligent profession of faith, and give evidence in a godly life that he has in fact experienced "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." I have no heart for disputing with such brethren and sisters. We are agreed as to the thing signified. We differ only as to the proper application of an outward sign. How sad it would be, and how foolish, to mar our fellowship in that which we both hold to be spiritual and vital, by too eager disputation about that which is outward and visible, and which is confessedly of no use or value apart from its spiritual import.

It is right for me to call attention to the record of Lydia's reception into the Christian Church (Acts xvi. 15): "And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide. And she constrained us." I shall no more assert here, than in the other case, that there were infants in the household. We are not told, and I am not sure, whether there were. While I frankly admit this, I will just as frankly say that this and kindred statements in the New Testament about the baptism of households do seem to me like the writing of men who believed in the baptism of households *as such*, not merely in the baptism of believers as


such. It certainly is more natural for missionaries to use the same form of expression, who, when they baptize believers, baptize also their households as a matter of course, than for those who baptize only believers with such members of their households as are believers also. These find no occasion to speak of baptizing households. Even when all the members of any family, being believers, are baptized, they do not at all baptize them as members of that household, but only as individual believers, and their reports and records naturally take shape accordingly. The apostolic records took what seems to us the pedobaptist shape. Another instance of this is in 1 Cor. i. 16, where Paul, while showing plainly that he regards baptism anyway as of vastly less importance than preaching, so that he seldom baptized anybody himself, still did speak of having "baptized the household of Stephanas."

I have already adverted to that remarkable affirmation of Paul (Gal. iii. 29) that, "if we be Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Coupling this with the promise to Abraham, which was sealed by circumcision, we claim for our children, with ourselves, all the spiritual good which that Abrahamic covenant assured to the believing Israelite, and to his children with him: "And I

will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. xvii. 7).

No one believes that this promise made spiritual salvation certain to every one born into an Israelite household, and circumcised on the eighth day. No one doubts that an Israelite, duly circumcised, might apostatize from the covenant of his God, and go "to his own place," as surely Judas did.

Was there, then, no advantage in being an Israelite, born and circumcised in a home over which the divine covenant extended? We might justly answer this question in the words of Paul. Advantage there indeed was, "much every way, chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. iii. 1, 2). If he said this of the privilege of belonging to the Jewish nation, we do not pervert it in applying it to the privilege of belonging to a Jewish household, of being born and circumcised and reared in a Jewish home. Paul was far from teaching, and far from thinking, that the advantage consisted in the being circumcised. It consisted in that possession and use of the oracles of God which circumcision pledged, of which circumcision was the token. There was *immense advantage* in being born and reared in a home



in which divine influences were enjoyed, and to which divine promises were given, such as circumcision signified and sealed.

There is the same advantage in being born and reared in a truly Christian home, of parents who take hold of God's ancient promise with full faith, according to inspired Paul's assurance that they are "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

I am not by any means so solicitous to commend the view which I take of the ordinance of baptism in its application to infant children of believers, as to exalt the spiritual privilege which I understand that visible rite to signify. That privilege, I have found, some Christian parents hold as dear as we, although they cannot accept our view of the applicability of the rite to infants.

The essential spiritual privilege is, to have God in our homes. It is to have the Saviour come into our houses, and bring salvation to all their inmates.

1. It is infinitely desirable that every husband and wife be united "in the Lord"—"as being heirs together of the grace of life." The union of two human beings in marriage is the closest and most intimate which human life knows. It supposes harmony of views, and sympathy as to all that is most important and precious. It is a sad lack, if such harmony and

sympathy be not between them in regard to their relations to God and their anticipations of eternity. I need not dwell upon this. All to whom my words will come admit it to be so. There is no need that that sad fact should continue in the experience of any such. There is no impenitent man living in wedlock with a Christian wife who is not invited immediately to become a Christian. The reasons in favour of this are sufficient, and ought to be conclusive, apart from all human relations. But every one of those reasons is strengthened, every one of those considerations is intensified, by the fact that you are thus related. The human person to whom of all human persons you are most dear, and who is most dear to you, would be made more happy by your acceptance of Christ than by any other event whatever. It is not wrong for you to regard this, nor to be influenced by it. It is in his great mercy that God has set within your home such a persuasive power, drawing you toward himself; that he has fastened upon your heart so mighty an attraction heavenward. Do not resist it. Take the hand that was placed in yours in such affectionate and self-devoting confidence, and let it lead you to Christ. Clasp that hand with yours this day upon your open *Bible*. Kneel together this day before the Lord, in

cordial union of prayer, and consecration to him of your home, and your mutual love, and your united life. He who made you male and female, he who instituted the holy estate of marriage, he who said, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," is not willing that you should be permanently put asunder even by death. He is not willing that now you should be estranged from each other, out of union with each other, in respect to your most important experiences, in respect to your spiritual life.

2. A husband and wife being not only united in true and pure love to each other, but united in Christ, have exceeding great and precious encouragement to seek from him the salvation of their offspring. Apart altogether from what we believe concerning God's covenant with Abraham and the interest of Christ's people in it, is there anything touching which it is easier for two Christian hearts to be agreed in asking it of God, than the salvation of a child that is bone of of their bone and flesh of their flesh? To what more surely than to this can that sweet promise of Jesus be applied: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" ? (Matt. xviii. 19.)

And do not all we who believe in that special Abrahamic covenant, and in its perpetual validity and present availableness to us, find in it a strong reinforcement of our trust in this general assurance concerning united prayer? Do Christian parents take hold on those divine assurances with anything like the confidence which the character of Him who gives them deserves? I cannot think that those parents at all appreciate the exceeding riches of God's promise, who only take encouragement from it to pray for the "conversion" of their children after they have come to "years of understanding." I have given my reasons for believing in the "early beginning of salvation;" so early that the word "conversion" is not properly applicable to it, inasmuch as that word implies a *turning* from a course which they never begin who experience the earliest beginning of salvation. There is nothing in Scripture to forbid, there is much in Scripture, and in the happiest Christian experience, to encourage the belief that God does meet some souls with his regenerating grace at the beginning point of their history, as moral, responsible creatures, "so that their whole nature may be developed in a state of reconciliation with God."* Is anything more *proper* to be asked of God in earnest union of believ-

* Dr. Charles Hodge.

ing prayer, by any two disciples of Christ, than this by two who are united in marriage, in behalf of their own child? May not a married pair who so dwell together as heirs of the grace of life "that their prayers be not hindered," scripturally hope to obtain this early beginning of salvation for all their offspring?

I earnestly commend such early and complete salvation of households to the contemplation, to the prayers, to the hopes, of all who lay the foundations of homes in the union of believing Christian hearts.

Yet let me not seem to teach or to hold that in homes in which this best experience has not been secured, there may not yet be full salvation of all the household. You who are now dwelling together in the same home, fed daily from the same table, sharing all home experiences of joy and of sorrow, while some of your number have hope in Christ, and others of you have no such hope—why should this separation continue? It is not God's desire to have it so. He evidently wishes you all to be happy together in him; together saved by his Son, our Saviour.

It surely is a sad thing that there should be divided households in a Christian congregation; that in the same home there should be some loving and trusting the Lord Jesus, and some who do not love and trust

him. There surely is no need of this. I am afraid that mistaken views of what is supposed to be orthodoxy lead some to assume that this must be so; and I apprehend that this assumption is among the causes of its continuing to be so. There is no need of its being so. There is no reason for its being so. There is no excuse for its being so. There are families in which all are Christians, parents and children all dwelling together "as heirs of the grace of life." There is no good reason why, in any home in which there are any Christians, all should not be Christians. Every family in which there is one saved person has a present example, which if the whole family will but follow, there is at once a saved family.

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CHAPTER IX.

SALVATION OF SOCIETY.



BEAUTIFUL and instructive parable of our Lord is recorded by Matthew and by Luke in a single sentence: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matt. xiii. 33; Luke xiii. 21). It is quite remarkable that this is the only instance in the New Testament in which the action of leaven is used to illustrate the diffusion of good influence. In other places leaven is the type of unwholesome and evil influences.

"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. xvi. 6), said Jesus to his disciples; and he marvelled that they did not at once understand that he was warning them against the pernicious teaching of those sects. Luke, also, informs us that he had reference not only to their

erroneous teaching, but to the "hypocrisy" involved in it. They did not sincerely mean what they taught (Luke xii. 1).

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, refers to the diffusive quality of leaven, its power to "leaven the whole lump," and exhorts them to "purge out the old leaven." He speaks further, in the same connection, of "the leaven of malice and wickedness" (1 Cor. v. 6-8). He uses the same type for similar admonition to the Galatians (v. 9). Considering that leaven was forbidden to the Israelites in their chief national festival, we should rather expect it to be used in Scripture as a symbol of that which is to be shunned than of that which is to be sought and prayed for. Yet there is no reason to think that ordinarily, and apart from that religious festival, there was any objection to the use of leavened bread in Jewish families. Indeed our Lord's reference in his parable seems to assume that his hearers were familiar with this use of leaven, as we are in our domestic bread-making. It is a beautiful and truly a wonderful process, involving one of nature's deep and cunning mysteries, mastered and managed by human skill for human use. Observe the frugal housewife preparing bread for her family. From her well-provided store-room *she brings* a sufficient quantity of flour. *She has*

at hand the several ingredients which experience or science has taught her to provide. She carefully mingles them, observing the required conditions of moisture, temperature, etc. Then, placing the whole mass in a secure position, she leaves it. Shall we say that she leaves it to itself? Shall we say that she leaves it to nature?—to the operation of forces and laws of chemistry? Let us rather say (telling the truth more fully and more deeply) she leaves it to God, who instituted and perpetually upholds and works those laws and forces. While she busies herself here and there in the house, or while she reads, or entertains company, or while she sleeps, those forces, under those laws, work on, because God evermore works in them. An invisible force, God's invisible finger, touches every particle of that mass, and makes it tingle and stir and lift up itself with a strange life. No longer a heavy, inert lump, it expands, and rises in beautiful porous lightness. She must hasten to prevent its pouring itself wastefully over. See the good housewife's look of complete satisfaction as she lifts the cover. With cheerfulness of hope she kneads, and divides into loaves, and deposits these in the heated oven; from which in due time she brings them forth ready for the table. Industrious and wisely working, working in confor-

mity with nature (that is, in conformity with God's orderly way of working), she has God working with her unto the happy result—the good cheer of her table, and the nourishment and health of her family.

What is the instrument, provided and energized by God, and dutifully used by her, for this good and useful work? It is the leaven—little in bulk, but great in power. She puts it into the midst of the flour; she buries it there, and quite hides it out of sight. But it cannot stay hidden. Its mysterious influence soon quickens the adjacent particles; through them it is transmitted to the next beyond; onward and onward still spreads the diffusive influence, until every particle has waked from its torpor, and has touched and waked its neighbour, and the whole lump is leavened.

Our Lord has hallowed this process of nature, this familiar transaction of domestic life, by setting it in his gospel as one of his many types of the kingdom of heaven; that kingdom of which he so beautifully said, it “cometh not with observation,”—it is “within you.”

In his use of this type, he recognizes some important characteristics of the human mind in human society: and he shows how thought, opinion, ideas, *teaching*, true or false, work upon the human mind

in human society, for corruption, debasement, ruin; or for quickening, uplifting, salvation.

In his parable, he likens the kingdom of heaven to leaven. The type is not inapplicable to the experience of individuals—to what an old writer has called, in his title of a precious book, “the rise and progress of religion in the soul.” Softly and silently the power of the Divine Spirit is felt in the human spirit, waking it to right thought, quickening its sensibility, rousing its conscience, making its affections rise to things above, giving it a benevolent expansion and a devout aspiration. From the hidden, central places of the spirit, the quickening influence extends through all the substance of the character unto the outermost circumference of the life.

Still more strikingly applicable is the type to the rise and progress of religion in communities, the application of the gospel to the salvation of human society. Having meditated upon salvation by Christ, in various aspects of it, as experienced by individuals, having also considered what the Scriptures teach concerning the salvation of households, we naturally inquire what we may scripturally hope from the Lord Jesus for human society at large.

What is “human society”? The phrase calls our minds to mankind, as they are associated and related.

Mankind are obviously fitted by nature for mutual association and relations. It was not more true of the first man, that it was "not good for him to be alone," than it is true of all other men, and of all women. Neither is that first relation, which was formed in Eden, the only relation which is needed by all men. No two human beings are altogether sufficient for each other. It is not good for any pair of human beings to be alone. Their nature needs, for its best development and condition, a wider and more various association. God has provided for this. The family, if it is the first and the fundamental form of human society, is not its only form. Human nature would be dwarfed and stunted and deformed by attempting to make it so. The family naturally expands into the wider society, from which states and nations are developed; and the wide community of nations as naturally arises. When we speak of "society," we mean more than the home circle of any single household. We at least include a considerable number of households, having some kind of social relations with one another, holding some kind of intercourse. These relations and this intercourse may grow out of business, and may be cultivated for the sake of business. They may relate to literature and science, and be *valued as helps to intellectual improvement.* They

may be founded in common views and sympathies concerning religion. They may have reference to that need of protection from wrong and violence for the sake of which we establish and uphold civil governments. Any or all of these forms and modes and purposes of association, and any or all of the relations which they involve, may be included in the phrase "human society."

It is sadly evident that, in all these forms and phases of it, human society is dreadfully damaged and corrupted by sin. Sin is always a thing of personal, individual choice, responsibility, blame. No wrong thing can be done, or spoken, or purposed, but some person has to answer to God for it. Yet two persons, or many persons, may agree together and unite in the doing of a wrong; one person may influence another to the doing of wrong; and when many persons are influencing one another to wrong, the evil power and tendency fearfully accumulate.

Such has been the sad experience of mankind in all generations, and in all lands. It thus naturally comes to pass that not only is each person in every human community a sinner and a sufferer, needing pardon, needing healing, needing to be brought back to God, needing salvation; but every community, as

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such, suffers in its common interests and character by the sin of its members, and by their association in sin. Some of the worst evils are social evils. Some of the most ruinous vices owe their prevalence to evil association. Some of the worst consequences of sin, in this life, are its effects upon communities. There are many evils and vices from which it does not seem to be possible to relieve or reclaim single and isolated persons. There are evils of such a character that, even as men help each other into them, they need each other's help to get out of them; and there is help of God which comes to men, not separately, to each person by himself, but to men as they are naturally associated, and in their actual mutual relations.

We have seen that this is so in the family, in the home; that there is such a fact, such a blessed fact, as the salvation of households: is it so in the wider associations, in the larger communities? Is there salvation for *human society*? This is the great question of our time. This is the great question of all times. The evils which oppress and afflict society—"the oppression of the poor, the sighing of the needy," the groaning of victims of tyranny, political corruption, commercial dishonesty, intemperance and *lewdness*, with all their hideous abominations and

- immeasurable debasement—is there salvation from these for human society? Can not only a few who have fallen into these pits of misery and sin be picked out, and a considerable number be held back from falling in, but can a community be rid of these pits? Can *society* be saved from them?

Certainly there has been a great amount of philanthropic endeavour for this; and while very excellent results have been obtained, there has generally been a sad falling short, very far short, of what philanthropic hearts have always desired, and always must desire. Efforts for the reformation of men in large masses, for the deliverance of extensive communities from abounding vices, have been often discouraging failures. Moral reformations, giving great promise of sweeping triumphantly through large communities, have often fallen far short of the results which their promoters have hoped for, and sometimes they have been succeeded by disastrous reactions.

May we not hope that the kingdom of heaven is yet to come, in human society, more effectually and more fully than has yet been seen? Is not the heaven yet to leaven the whole lump?

Let us limit our present inquiry to one particular moral reformation—that which relates to the evil of intemperance. From a time beyond which the

memory of but few now living extends, no other evil existing in society has engaged the attention of Christians and philanthropists more extensively or more earnestly. It has been widely proclaimed, and generally admitted, that this holds a foremost place among the evils which afflict society. Its manifold and dreadful miseries, its malignant aggravation of all miseries, are scarcely capable of exaggeration. The morbid conditions of body which intoxicating drink induces; its enfeebling and debasement of the intellect; its debauching of conscience; its hardening of the heart; its blighting of all pure affections; its stimulation of every impure and unholy impulse; its desolation of home; its multiplication of crimes; its loading of society with burdens of otherwise unnecessary taxation; and its enfeebling of society by enervating vices; its hopeless ruin of souls by rendering them incapable of attending to the gospel and embracing it;—all these are but too well known everywhere to thoughtful and observant men. The oratory and the literature of our age have depicted them vividly and abundantly. These pictures have become so common and so familiar that they have lost much of their former power to impress us. Yet it is true that in our land especially, and in Great Britain, a vast *amount of honest effort* has been put forth to deliver

our communities from this evil. A great deal has been accomplished by these efforts. A great number have been saved. Yet in both countries intemperance continues to be the great evil, confessedly the cause of by far the greater part of the crime, the poverty, the casualties, and the domestic miseries which abound.

In both these countries there is at present, very extensively, a renewal of these efforts. With what hope may we look upon them? With what heart may we engage in them?

The great hopefulness of the present movement is in its frank and humble and hearty acknowledgment of Jesus Christ. Very extensively the temperance movement of this time is evidently but a phase of religious revival. In communities in which there is extensive and thorough religious awakening, where Christians are fervent in prayer and diligent in labour, and where great numbers of impenitent persons are seeking salvation from sin, many drunkards, as well as harlots, are found among them, seeking the Saviour, and rejoicing in the assurance of his pardoning love. They also accept the assurance of his readiness to uphold and strengthen them unto the conflict with evil—with appetite within and manifold solicitation from without—confessing the utter

insufficiency of their own resolutions and their own powers. This is a practical acknowledgment of Christ as the only Saviour from this as from every other form of sin.

In some instances, also, the religious revival begins with a movement for the reformation of men from intemperance, commenced and continued in the name, and depending on the gracious power, of the Lord Jesus. Such effort is owned and honoured by God: the Holy Spirit comes into the hearts of men and women, convincing them of their guilt and need; they become not merely sober men and women, but disciples of Christ. It certainly is a very noticeable fact, that many of the men who are now most impressively pleading the cause of temperance are men who once were drunkards, and who now humbly and thankfully and explicitly ascribe their reformation wholly to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not unfrequently they testify that again and again they tried to reform by the strength of their own wills, and that again and again they failed. Now, seeking divine help by simple prayer, honouring Christ by open and thankful acknowledgment of his gracious help, they feel a strong assurance that he will not fail them. Well may they thus trust him. He is *worthy thus to be trusted*. He has a gracious power

to help all who trustingly seek his help to be delivered from sin.

We shall have reason to cherish hope for the success of this movement, just in proportion as it preserves this character. We can really and effectually help it forward just in proportion as we are near to Christ, and have his Spirit dwelling in us.


This surely is a hopeful movement. It is a Christian movement. It plants itself on Christian principles. It is led by Christian men, and nourished by Christian women. It honours the Lord Jesus. It invites and encourages trust in him only. It aims to extend his kingdom; to realize his salvation. It accepts the apostle John's declaration: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8).

This peculiar and hopeful extension of salvation to those for whom there has been the least hope of it, ought surely to engage the unselfish labour and prayer of those already saved. The Church of God upon earth is the living body, of which Christ is the living head. Her real possession and manifestation of his indwelling must have the effect of destroying the works of the devil, of nullifying his fascinating, enslaving power, and releasing his victims. If the

evil works of the evil one could prosper and prevail in the very presence of the Church, and receive from her no check and no hindrance, she would justly apprehend that she lacks his power and his indwelling. When she is conscious of his power and his indwelling, his virtue will go forth out of her to heal the world's sicknesses.

CHAPTER X.

SALVATION CONSUMMATED.

HE salvation which Jesus Christ brings, and which his gospel reveals, is a salvation of immortal beings. They are everywhere so represented and contemplated in the Scriptures. It is expressly claimed for this Saviour, that he "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). That which was uncertainly hoped for by the best and wisest heathen, is made a certainty by this divine revelation. This assurance of immortality, and of an available opportunity to make it an immortality of holy bliss, makes this revelation indeed a gospel, glad tidings.

The beginning of this great salvation, in each person's experience, is in his believing acceptance of the Saviour; at once securing his release from condemnation, and making him, in that sense, at once a saved

man—saved completely and once for all, rescued, no longer exposed to condemnation.

This salvation progresses in the work of sanctification, which is not unfitly contemplated as a convalescence of the soul from the disease of sin, its gradual recovery of spiritual health. It is not merely the cessation from positive acts of sin, ceasing to transgress the law of God ; it is the cure of the soul from all disposition to sin—the recovery of it from all spiritual infirmity.

If we had to contemplate this as a result only reached at the close of existence ; if we were left to regard death as not only the dissolution of our bodies, but as the cessation of our being ; if we were compelled to feel ourselves so sinful all our lives, and could only hope to be free from sin just when we cease to be ;—surely we could not call that salvation, nor him a Saviour to whom we should owe only that. No such meagre, paltry, futile thing is revealed to us, or offered to us under so great a name, in the New Testament. It is “eternal salvation” (Heb. v. 9). It is the salvation of immortal beings, beings whose immortality the Author of this salvation has brought to light, having for them conquered and abolished death.

The life which the saved are to live eternally is *their salvation consummated*.

Where shall that life be? To this question the Scriptures give no definite or clear answer. We may indeed scripturally say that it is in heaven, or that it is where God is, and where Christ is. We may recall Christ's own words: "I go to the Father:" "I go to prepare a place for you:" "I will not leave you comfortless;" "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." These assurances are sufficient for our faith, and for our peace and satisfaction; but they do not furnish our minds with any distinct conceptions whereby we can locate the scene of all this bliss. Our faith resting on our Saviour's word, our imagination is left free. That house of "many mansions"—his "Father's house"—whether those words describe some world fairer than this, revolving about some more resplendent sun, in some far-off region of space; or some glorious system of worlds, far beyond Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, beyond all the stars that sparkle to our vision through our most powerful glasses—some system of worlds to which this solar system may be compared as a child's play-house to an imperial palace, and through which from world to world the saved are to go and come as freely as a child from room to room in his father's house;—of all this the Lord has not told us. What our relations to space

will be, when this mortal shall have put on immortality, we do not know. Conjecture is not forbidden. The regaling of the imagination is not sinful ; but we must not mistake imagination for faith, nor teach conjecture as doctrine, nor yet as science. Is there, then, no solid substance of doctrine within our reach, available for present comfort and edification—nothing which we may steadfastly believe and assuredly know ? Indeed there is, and not a little.

1. The abode of the saved, wherever it may be, will be inexpressibly beautiful and glorious, fitted to give its occupants the most complete and perfect satisfaction. We are well assured of this by what our Saviour said to the disciples (John xiv. 2): "In my Father's house are many mansions.....I go to prepare a place for you." Taken in its connection, we cannot understand this as less than an assurance of ample provision in the heavenly home, for every need of those whom he promises to bring to it. Glimpses into that abode have been vouchsafed to a few favoured ones. Stephen, when dying that cruel death, "looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, *and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God*" (Acts vii. 55, 56). But who on earth, save

the three who witnessed the Lord's transfiguration, has been able to understand what that vision was? To one of those three there was a revelation made upon the isle Patmos, an apocalypse, which he was ordered to record for us. In its last two chapters, we read of a celestial city with wall of jasper, its foundations garnished with precious stones, its gates pearl, and "the streets of the city pure gold, as it were transparent glass,"—"no night there, no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light." We read also of its river of life, and its tree of life on either side of the river. From all this we cannot understand less than that this divine effort at revelation or disclosure of the heavenly world to us here, speedily exhausts all human language and metaphors and powers of conception. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. ii. 9).

2. The abode of the saved will be suited not only to their souls, but to their raised bodies. Those bodies will be very different from these, yet they will be bodies. They will indeed be these bodies; not other bodies then and there newly created, of other earth than this, other matter, other substance. The representation constantly is, that these bodies shall

be raised, reanimated, revived. Not, indeed, as was Lazarus's body, and that of the daughter of Jairus, and that of the young man at Nain, and that of our Lord, revived before they were decomposed. "Dust to dust;" no doubt, all our bodies will crumble, and be utterly dissipated among kindred earthly elements, entering into we know not what other combinations. It is no more necessary that the same particles of matter thus dissipated should be regathered, in order to maintain the identity of the body before death and after the resurrection, than it is necessary for the body now to hold continuously the same particles of matter in order to preserve its identity, to be the same body, from year to year, and from youth to age. In fact, we well know that our bodies are continually decaying and dissolving through all their cells and tissues, and are continually renewed by vital forces. Yet from childhood to age we have the same bodies. There is in our bodies something real, which is not the ever-changing dust, but which with mysterious potency evermore constitutes that dust a living body. The qualities and powers of this body might be greatly changed, for better or for worse, without losing its identity. Is not that bloated, *loathsome* body, which you see reeling out of a *grog-shop*, or *standing* either before or behind its counter,

the same body that it was ten years ago, though you knew it then in youthful vigour or childlike beauty? It has not lost its identity, although it has been so greatly and so sadly changed in its qualities.

The body of your friend which you now see so fair and vigorous, is it not the same body which a few months ago you saw prostrated with disease, pitifully emaciated and powerless? It has not lost its identity, although so great and so joyous a change has passed upon it.

"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52). Plainly, we shall all be changed, —those of us who shall have been dead for centuries, and those of us who will then be alive on the earth. The apostle speaks for us all, of all the ages. The raised dead shall be not more changed from what they were before death than shall those yet living be changed in that one moment, the twinkling of an eye. But changed, vastly changed, all those millions of bodies will be. They will be bodies still. Vastly changed they might be, in form, in qualities, in powers, and still be kept within the same physical laws which now hold them. I looked out on the

lake visible from my windows, on a cold, clear morning. As the sun was rising, there emerged a body of vapour more beautiful than the fabled Venus, born of the sea. With wonderful grace of motion it climbed the air, evolving forms various and mobile, and arraying itself in colours most fit to honour the sun's bright coming. Was not that airy, facile, soaring body, the same which lay before in liquid helplessness? This change of inert, ever down-flowing water into aerial, soaring, luminous mist, is wrought within nature, in accordance with natural law, by the steady action of forces which have been steadily acting from the creation of the world, according to the order of nature which God ordained in the beginning. The men of science in our time tell us that, in the onworking of these forces, the time may come when the whole world—its fluid seas, its rocky strata, and its subterranean fires—shall all burst again into the vast volume of nebulous vapour which perhaps it once was, in that primeval time when the earth was "without form and void." The ordering of those forces is the word of God, who "spoke, and it was done." If they rightly interpret God's word (as it has been spoken through nature and written in *Scripture*), who say that his word condensed the *primal cloud* ("nebula") into this solid globe, and

formed and fashioned it into this habitable world; there is no difficulty in supposing that his word commanding, his will directing these awful forces, may bring a dissolution of terrestrial nature as sublime as any have understood the Scriptures to foretell, or the pent-up volcanic fires and latent chemical forces to intimate. When this human history shall have told all its ages, and fulfilled all its marvels; when earthly time shall end in that sublime catastrophe which both science and Scripture forebode; who will question the power of our Creator to refashion the same substance into a new world, whose landscapes, and whose climates, and whose whole system of physical laws and forces shall be to the present as the fairest of earth's cultured landscapes to a waste howling wilderness? As little, surely, is it to be questioned that his power can take the same substance which forms our present bodies, and (whether by forces now existing, or by new forces which he will then originate) form and fashion it into bodies whose beauty, and powers, and susceptibilities shall far transcend all that we know of these, and all that we imagine of those which walked together in Eden,—shall equal all that we can imagine of those that tread the golden pavements of New Jerusalem.

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His written word abundantly warrants our expectation that the bodies of the saved will be such as to give their souls the happiest condition, and that the world they will dwell in will be perfectly adapted to their wants and their powers. It will be no sin-blighted world, bringing forth thorns and thistles; no creation groaning and travailing in pain, under God's frown at its people's wickedness. Christ's saved people will dwell in an uncursed world.

3. The saved in eternity will enjoy perpetual rest. This is not to say that they will be in perpetual idleness. In a world and a life in which labour is so apt to be toil, and so sure to bring fatigue and exhaustion, we are liable to get a low and unworthy conception of rest, as if it were slothful inactivity, the lazy sleep of the sluggard. The heavenly idea of rest is not cessation from activity, but exemption from fatigue, from alarms, and from anxiety. Powers that are incapable of weariness; employment that has no tendency to exhaustion; work that is perpetual play; refreshing, joyous, exultant activity; perpetual day, with no felt need of night;—such is the heavenly rest. “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven *with his mighty angels*” (2 Thess. i. 7). “And I *heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write,*

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours;* and their works do follow them" (Rev. xiv. 13).

Amid the fatigues of these earthly toils, and the worry of these earthly anxieties, it may be difficult for us adequately to conceive of such rest. Doubtless it is not necessary that we should have such adequate conception. It is even now the sweet and blessed privilege of all who follow Jesus, to know that he will bring them at last where they shall feel no more fatigue, no more alarms, no more solicitude. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. xi. 28, 29).

It does not contradict this affirmation of heavenly rest when we add—

4. The saved in eternity will find occasion for the highest and the most energetic exercise of intellectual powers. For what observations, what researches, what discoveries will there not be opportunity? Over what fields of observation, with what delicious

* The word is κόπων, denoting toil, or wearisome effort; not ἔργον or ἐνέργεια, which might denote as strenuous activity without fatigue.

facility, may not those spiritual bodies soar and range? Of what vision, insight, intuition, may not those sinless, unwearying spirits be capable? What science! what philosophy! what study and comprehension of history!—not the history of families and nations, but of worlds and dispensations!—and how shall all the celestial sciences resolve themselves into all-comprehending Theology, in which we shall be learning more and more of GOD, for ever and ever! “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Cor. xiii. 12). “Beloved, now are we children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John iii. 2).

5. The saved in eternity will doubtless enjoy the steady exercise of pure and holy affection. “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John iv. 16).

They will be ever in the most congenial society;—“with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God;” “ever with the Lord;” where “there shall never enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever *worketh* abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which *are written* in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. xxi. 27).

Add to all this the conscious approbation of their own consciences, and of all holy fellow-creatures, and of God, with the undoubting assurance that all this is to endure for ever, and what is lacking to fulfil and to consummate a complete SALVATION? "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 15-17).

"And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and HIS SERVANTS SHALL SERVE HIM: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign [shall be kings] for ever and ever" (Rev. xxii. 3-5).

THE END.

1

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